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ABSTRACT

Noting that family involvement in education is important, this report describes and evaluates the Parents Sharing Books (PSB) program which was designed to encourage parents to become involved with their middle-school children's education. The report notes that the program was implemented over a 2.5 year period and had the following goals: increase family literacy (the reading of books and the positive interaction between parents and middle school children through books); encourage parents and children to communicate better; and provide effective instruction to leader teams who would then provide similar instruction to parents in their local communities. The first section of the report discusses project development; product development; and training, support, and reaching-out. The second section of the report provides a profile of PSB participants. The third section discusses evaluating PSB and provides case reports. The fourth section of the report discusses limitations of the evaluation of PSB, and presents conclusions and recommendations. Numerous appendixes are attached. They include a list of PSB sites; pre- and post- parent and student surveys; a consent form; letters to participants and leaders; stories of teamwork and support of PSB leaders; stories of the adaptability of PSB; a discussion of the attitudes and perspectives that influenced PSB success; and stories of how PSB helped parents find time, how it informed parents about adolescents, and how it enhanced parent/child relationships and family communication. (RS)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements v

Introduction 1

Section 1

- Project Development 2
- Product Development 3
- Training, Support, and Reaching-Out 5

Section 2

- Profile of PSB Participants 8

Section 3

- Evaluating PSB 11
- Parents Sharing Books Case Reports 35

Section 4

- What We Still Don't Know 45
- Conclusions 47
- Recommendations 49

References 51

Appendices

- Appendix A: PSB Sites 52
- Appendix B: Parent Pre-Survey 55
- Appendix C: Parent Post-Survey 56
- Appendix D: Student Pre-Survey 57
- Appendix E: Student Post-Survey 58
- Appendix F: Consent Form 59
- Appendix G: Letter to PSB Leader(s) 63
- Appendix H: Letter to PSB Participants 64
- Appendix I: Request to Print Participants' Stories 65
- Appendix J: Teamwork and Support 67
- Appendix K: Adaptability of PSB 105
- Appendix L: Attitudes and Perspectives that Influenced PSB Success 123
- Appendix M: PSB Helped Parents Find Time 137
- Appendix N: PSB Informed Parents About Adolescents 150
- Appendix O: PSB Enhanced Parent/Child Relationships and Family Communication 164

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C.B.S. and M.R.S.
Bloomington, IN
1993

INTRODUCTION

There is general agreement across many studies that family involvement in education is important, that all families can be guided to become more knowledgeable partners in their children's education, and that programmatic efforts can help students and parents improve their habits of reading and their attitudes toward school. This report chronicles a major effort to help parents learn specific strategies.

Without information about likely results of particular approaches, educators designing new programs or policies for improving and increasing parent involvement are at a real disadvantage. They need to know which strategies actually lead to improved achievement, attitudes, or habits, and which approaches best encourage parents to affect change in their children's academic life. Without clear linkages between practice and outcomes, educators, policy leaders, and parents cannot make informed decisions.

Different types of involvement lead to different outcomes for students, for parents, and for teaching practice (Brandt, 1989). For example, Epstein (see Brandt, 1989) suggests that practices which involve parents in students' learning activities at home help students develop better attitudes toward school work, greater homework completion, and higher achievement in practiced skills.

In one effort to involve parents in their middle school children's reading, the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, developed the *Parents Sharing Books* (PSB) program. Implemented over a two-and-a-half year period, the program was designed to encourage parents to become involved with their children's education, and to prevent these students from abandoning reading as they moved through their teen years.

The primary purpose of *Parents Sharing Books* was to increase family literacy, that is, to increase the reading of books and to increase positive interaction between parents and middle school children through books.

A second purpose of *the Parents Sharing Books* project was to encourage parents and children to communicate better during a critical stage in their relationship. We hypothesized that reading and talking about young adult books would help parents and middle school children ease the strain in relationships that often arise during these pre-adolescent years. Project activities promoted respect for ideas and the social role that sharing ideas has in intellectual growth.

A third purpose of *Parents Sharing Books* was to provide effective instruction to leader teams who would then provide similar instruction to parents in their local communities.

During the period from July, 1990 through May, 1993, the *Parents Sharing Books* project went through a number of stages to achieve its goals. These included: 1) planning and organizing for PSB; 2) training, support, and expansion of PSB; and 3) evaluating the PSB project.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

PSB IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the PSB project included laying the groundwork for all stages of the project; i.e., establishing an advisory board, establishing support staff, recruiting PSB leaders, developing PSB materials and training seminars, and evaluating the project.

PSB Advisory Board

Members of the advisory board were qualified and experienced individuals from both the public and private sectors. Members of the *Parents Sharing Books* advisory board include Pat Brown, Director of African American History of Multicultural Education, Indianapolis Public Schools; Alice Davis, Business Consultant; Leo Fay, Director of Summer and Special Sessions, Indiana University; Jack Humphrey, Director of Middle Grades Reading Network, University of Evansville; Teresa Jump, Director of Indiana Parents Project, Indiana Youth Institute; Amy Oxley, Young Adult Librarian, Indianapolis Public Libraries; Blanche Ryan, Reading Supervisor, Indianapolis Public Schools; and John Shefelbine, Professor of Reading Education, California State University, Sacramento.

PSB Staff

The support staff at the Family Literacy Center played an important part in the realization of the *Parents Sharing Books* project. Carl B. Smith, Ph.D., the Director of the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University conceived the project and provided guidance for its operation. Michael Shermis, the Project Coordinator, served as the operations manager and contacted schools in the targeted areas to arrange for their participation. Ellie Macfarlane participated in the design and implementation of PSB training opportunities for the teacher-parent teams in the project. Melinda Hamilton-Norris, the User Services Specialist for the *Parents Sharing Books* project, contacted principals and leader teams in the targeted areas, and coordinated training seminars. Marjorie R. Simic, the project evaluator, also helped develop instructional materials, provided training to leader teams, and helped PSB teams to implement *Parents Sharing Books* programs in their schools. In addition, numerous Indiana University research assistants served the project in various capacities.

Recruiting PSB Leaders

PSB leader teams were recruited from targeted areas established by the Indiana Middle School Reading Project. Recruiting leader teams took place in the fall and spring of each year. One hundred forty-one schools were targeted in counties with a high percentage of low-income families. Letters and brochures were sent to principals, Chapter 1 coordinators/directors, and curriculum specialists of middle/junior high schools within these counties explaining the project and asking for help in selecting qualified participants to act as leader teams—a leader team usually consisted of one teacher and one parent.

Leader teams agreed to 1) participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* Training Seminar, 2) train eight to ten parents in sharing books with their middle school children, 3) offer support and

encouragement to parents involved in the *Parents Sharing Books* group, 4) keep principals informed about the project's progress, 5) provide information for project evaluation, and 6) recruit other leader teams from their schools or nearby schools as a way of the expanding the *Parents Sharing Books* project.

Leader teams from targeted schools were awarded scholarships to participate in PSB training seminars. These scholarships provided opportunities for leader teams to attend a PSB training seminar at the expense of the project.

In order to promote community awareness and parent interest, news releases were sent to local newspapers in the localities of the PSB participants. Each release announced the leader team's participation in the *Parents Sharing Books* training seminar, and included a brief description of the parent involvement program.

Schools responding to this opportunity to participate in PSB agreed to certain responsibilities and commitments. Principals of participating schools agreed to 1) provide space for up to 50 books for the *Parents Sharing Books* project, 2) provide a location for parents and the leader team to meet once or twice a month throughout the school year, 3) provide paper for meeting handouts, copying expenses, and other items leader teams might need to run group meetings, and 4) offer support to make the project a success.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Training and start-up for the *Parents Sharing Books* project involved developing a training package that enabled leader teams to provide training to other parents. The staff at the Family Literacy Center produced the following PSB training materials for leader teams: 1) a PSB manual; 2) a PSB Bookshelf; 3) PSB bookmarks; 4) PSB audio magazines; 5) a PSB videotape; and 6) PSB reports.

PSB MANUAL

The *Parents Sharing Books* Training Manual provides leaders with directions, activities, and additional materials for conducting their parent meetings. Revisions to the manual were made as a result of the input of PSB leader teams and seminar presenters. The manual offers suggestions for involving parents and children in PSB and for conducting effective meetings that respond to the needs of participants.

The PSB training manual now has three major sections: 1) Setting PSB in Motion; 2) Conducting PSB Parent Meetings; and 3) Additional Support for PSB Leaders. These sections include background information, guidelines, and resources.

Section I in the manual (Setting PSB in Motion) explains the purpose and goals of PSB and describes how leader teams can implement a *Parents Sharing Books* program in their schools. Topics include training parents, responsibilities of leader teams and administrators, recruiting parents, suggestions for strengthening PSB after implementation, and evaluating a PSB program.

Letters to parents, newsletter bulletins announcing upcoming meetings, radio news releases, a calendar of PSB activities, and action plans are included in this section.

Section II in the manual (PSB Parent Meetings) describes the presentation format for conducting six parent meetings: 1) "Initiating PSB at Home"; 2) "Motivating Children to Read at Home"; 3) "Strategies for Sharing Books at Home"; 4) "More Strategies for Sharing Books at Home"; 5) "Moving Forward With PSB"; and 6) "Celebrating Success". The manual provides information and motivation techniques for each hour or hour-and-a-half long meeting. Each parent meeting contains the following:

- agendas
- leader guides which include information, presentation notes, transparencies, and a variety of activities for parent meetings
- leader support materials that include additional information on topics and references, leader action plans, handout masters, bookmarks, activity sheets, and evaluation forms.

Leader teams are encouraged to adapt the presentations and activities in the PSB manual to the needs and interests of their own parent groups.

Section III in the manual (Additional PSB Support for PSB Leaders) provides leader teams with supplemental information that may assist them in implementing a successful PSB program. Leaders are given suggestions about how to use the PSB audio magazines, tips for parents about enhancing vocabulary and comprehension, and an explanation of invented spelling which attempts to reduce a parents' inclination to correct their children's writing when they use the PSB book-sharing journal. Another article discusses reading levels and offers parents more guidance in selecting books for their children.

PSB Bookshelf

Leader teams participating in a PSB training seminar received a *Parents Sharing Books* Bookshelf containing fifty books. These bookshelves contain paperback books that contribute to a diversity of reading levels and interests. Students from the Bloomington middle schools helped with selecting the books for the *Parents Sharing Books* Bookshelf. These middle-school students browsed through a variety of tradebooks and then made their book choices based on what they 'like to read'.

PSB Bookmarks

Leader teams received bookmarks as part of their training package. These bookmarks—to be distributed to parents—offer suggestions for motivating children to read, tips for parents about listening to their children, suggestions for reading aloud effectively, helpful hints for parents to use during book sharing, and reminders for motivating children to read.

PSB Audio Books

Two audio books were developed for the project. They focus on concerns and problems which parents of middle school children often confront. The books are "Motivation and Reading"

and "Self-Esteem and Reading." These books with audio tapes provide specific steps parents can take to help their middle school children gain self-esteem and become motivated to learn. In these audio books, parents are offered suggestions and answers to practical questions. Activities are described that might be used at home to promote self-esteem and motivation.

PSB Videotape

A PSB videotape was produced to emphasize the goals and purposes of *Parents Sharing Books* and to help parents confront some difficulties in getting book sharing started at home. It also provides suggestions for establishing reading habits at home and for making book sharing a positive experience. The videotape features parents, teachers, and principals who are involved in a *Parents Sharing Books* program in their schools.

Leader teams are encouraged to use the PSB video during the first meeting to give participants an overview of the program. The purpose of this sixteen-minute videotape is to increase awareness of how PSB works and to hear what participants in the program are saying about the program. Listening to parents and teachers who are involved with the program talk about the benefits they receive from participating in PSB are examples of "motivational testimonies" that stimulate interest from other parents and teachers.

PSB Reports

Annual reports on PSB were prepared and entered into the ERIC/RCS database. These reports described the progress of the *Parents Sharing Books* project from 1990 to 1993. In these reports, the outcomes and limitations of the PSB project were elaborated on, and recommendations were made for strengthening and expanding the project.

TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND REACHING-OUT

PSB SEMINARS

PSB training seminars provide instruction and motivation for leader teams in establishing parent groups. This instruction provides modeling, materials, and activities that can enhance parent and adolescent communication through the use of books. PSB training provides leaders with the skills needed to train parents to use books at home, and it models effective sharing strategies for parents and children to use during their interactions.

The design of the PSB manual provides a framework for organizing PSB training seminars. The seminars guide leader teams through the six parent meetings. Leaders learn role-playing activities and strategies, and talk about ideas they will be presenting to parents.

In the training session entitled "Initiating PSB at Home," leader teams are reminded of their role in bringing parents to understand the critical value of reading and sharing during all stages of children's development. Leader teams learn activities that will help parents become more aware of their own reading attitudes and help them to set aside time for reading at home.

The second training session, "Motivating Children to Read at Home," provides leaders with information that can help parents promote reading at home. Leader teams learn about children's reading interests at various stages of development, how to help parents set reading goals, select books for their children, and assist children who are reluctant to share books.

"Strategies for Sharing Books" is the third training session. This session provides leader teams with information about three book-sharing strategies: 1) reading aloud; 2) holding book talks; and 3) listening attentively. Leader teams are provided opportunities to model these strategies in small groups. Leader teams are provided tips for parents on how to read aloud effectively, sample questions to encourage thoughtful book discussions, and suggestions for parents when listening to their children share thoughts and ideas.

The fourth session, "More Strategies for Sharing Books," presents leader teams with additional book-sharing strategies: 1) book-sharing journals; 2) book-sharing sketches; and 3) dramatic activities. Leaders engage in activities that allow them to role-play these strategies and to use them with parents.

In the fifth training session, "Moving Forward with PSB," leaders are provided activities that can make parents aware of the benefits they have received by participating in PSB and help them sustain family book sharing and communication. Leaders also learn how to enlist parents in their PSB group to reach out to more parents.

The last session in the PSB training seminars, "Celebrating Success," encourages leaders to celebrate the success of their *Parents Sharing Books* program. PSB leaders are provided suggestions for recognizing parents and children for their participation in the PSB program.

Support for PSB Leaders/Programs

Providing support for PSB leaders was seen as important to the success of local programs. Once leader teams received PSB training, contacts were made periodically by the PSB staff. Telephone calls were made six to eight weeks after the leader teams received training. These phone calls informed us when teams were scheduling meetings, how programs were moving forward, and how many parents were involved in PSB programs. The telephone contacts gave leaders an opportunity to ask questions about concerns specific to their program, and it also allowed them to share with us the successes they were having with their program.

Approximately thirty site visits were made to schools. These site visits enabled FLC staff members to meet with parent groups, promote the benefits of family reading, and collect data. Leaders and parents shared with us their experiences with the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Some site visits were used as opportunities for FLC staff to assist those teams who were experiencing difficulties in implementing their programs.

The staff at the Family Literacy Center made every effort to provide leaders with current and improved materials throughout the operation of PSB. In addition to phone contacts and site visits, newsletters were sent on a regular basis to all Lilly-targeted schools. These newsletters offered suggestions and support for participating schools; shared events, experiences, and stories from other leaders and parents; promoted PSB; and encouraged other schools in targeted areas to become involved with the *Parents Sharing Books* project.

Once PSB leaders provided us with feedback about how their programs were progressing, the FLC staff felt that it was important for PSB leaders to receive recognition for their efforts in taking on the responsibility of being PSB leaders and implementing successful PSB programs in their schools. With this idea in mind, an incentive plan became part of our PSB support component. This incentive plan was an opportunity to motivate PSB leaders to continue recruiting parents and carrying on with the responsibilities of a PSB leader. It was also a way for PSB leaders to obtain additional materials for their PSB programs. Through this plan, leaders were able to receive additional books for their PSB Bookshelf. Incentives and criteria included 1) five tradebooks for recruiting ten parents, 2) one tradebook for submitting articles and/or anecdotal evidence for the newsletter, 3) ten tradebooks for providing ten parent and ten student evaluations, 4) fifteen tradebooks for twenty parent and twenty student evaluations, 5) two tradebooks for requesting PSB staff member(s) to attend parent meetings, 6) ten tradebooks for attending a spring regional *Parents Sharing Books* training seminar, and 7) additional tradebooks for leaders who maintained their PSB program for consecutive years.

Expanding PSB

Regularly trying to involve more parents was part of the project's action plan. A formal attempt to expand the *Parents Sharing Books* project was conducted during each fall and spring of the project's operation. PSB Fall and Spring Regional Workshops provided training for new leaders and rejuvenated existing leaders. The regional workshops were held in areas across the state in Merrillville, Indianapolis, Bloomington, Evansville, Richmond, Ft. Wayne, Jeffersonville, Terre Haute, and Valparaiso.

Leader teams who received PSB training in the Fall were contacted prior to the PSB Spring Regional Workshops and were encouraged to recruit new leader teams from their area. Lilly-targeted schools who had not participated in PSB were also contacted, and encouraged to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project. The training for the PSB Spring Regional Workshops was patterned after the Fall seminars.

Additional efforts to expand PSB were initiated by FLC staff members. The benefits and results of the project were disseminated to schools in the midwest through brochures, presentations at regional, state, and national conferences, newspaper articles, and educational publications. Disseminating the benefits of the project to schools outside the Lilly-targeted counties allowed teachers, principals, and parents from the elementary level, and leader teams from Mississippi, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois to receive PSB training.

PROFILE OF PSB PARTICIPANTS

Based on the 1989-90 school census, Lilly-targeted school districts met one of the following criteria:

- 25% or more of the students on free and/or reduced lunches;
- less than 25% of the students on free and/or reduced lunches, and 1000 or more students enrolled;
- or 25% or more of the students on free and/or reduced lunches, and 1000 or more students enrolled.

These criteria enabled 18% of Indiana's school districts and 65% of the children in Indiana to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project and other middle school reading programs funded by the Lilly Endowment, INC.

There were one hundred forty-one Lilly-targeted middle schools located in fifty-three counties throughout Indiana that were eligible to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project. **Table I** shows a profile of PSB participation.

Table I: PROFILE OF PSB SITES
(Nov., 1990 - May, 1993)

Type of PSB Sites	#s
Lilly-targeted Sites	141
PSB Middle/Jr. High Sites	81
PSB Leaders	91
PSB Participants	2,483
Non-targeted PSB Sites	155
Elementary	57
Middle/Jr. H.S.	6
Out-of-state	74
Other PSB Sites	18

Eighty-one (57%) of the Lilly-targeted middle schools (n=141) participated in the *Parents Sharing Books* project (see Appendix A). Over 25% of the leaders in these schools participated in more than one PSB training seminar. Some of these schools had two and three PSB leaders working together to implement their program.

Interest from schools and agencies outside the Lilly-targeted sites indicated to project staff that a more rigorous approach to expanding PSB might be appropriate. **Table I** illustrates that the following leaders from schools and agencies not targeted as Lilly sites also participated in PSB training:

- six non-targeted middle schools
- fifty-seven elementary schools
- seventy-four schools outside the state of Indiana (Mississippi, Michigan, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio)
- eighteen other agencies such as public libraries, Head Start, career centers, developmental centers, and adult education programs

Interest from elementary schools and other family related agencies resulted in additions to the manual, such as, book lists for grade levels, appropriate read-a-louds, and books that serve as writing models for the different grade levels.

Since the start of the *Parents Sharing Books* project, over two thousand parents in Indiana were involved in the program. The number of parents shown in **Table I** is an approximation. Leader teams reported that exact numbers of parents participating in their PSB programs were difficult to calculate. In some cases, not every parent who came to the first meeting was able to attend all the PSB meetings. Leaders reported having 'successful' groups with as few as five participating parents, and eight PSB leaders reported 'successful' groups that had as many as thirty participants in their PSB groups. One PSB leader explained that she had parents participating in the program, but these parents were unable to attend PSB meetings:

> *I have children reading at home with their parents, but the parents are just not able to attend our meetings....I encourage my students to involve their parents in this dialogue journal activity when parents aren't able to come to meetings. We [PSB leader, student, and parent] write back and forth to each other. I have parents whom I have never seen at our Parents Sharing Books meetings, but we are writing back and forth in this dialogue journal. I write them notes about the reading they are doing at home together, and I always invite them to our PSB meetings. I've included notes about helping them find a ride to the meeting if they would like to come.*

Over 70% of the PSB schools from Lilly-targeted sites continue to have active PSB leaders; i.e., they conducted or initiated parent recruitment for a PSB program during the 1992-93 school year. **Table II** shows the number of PSB programs that remained active, became inactive, or decided to drop out.

Table II: STATUS OF LILLY-TARGETED PSB SITE (May,1993)

Active	Inactive	Dropped Out
58	22	1

Seventy-two percent of the Lilly-schools that participated in the *Parents Sharing Books* project (n=81) continued with their programs. One school that received PSB training never attempted to implement their PSB program. Various reasons were given by those Lilly-targeted middle school leaders and principals who did not implement and/or continue with their PSB program:

1) A potential PSB leader stated that her principal did not explain the responsibilities of a PSB leader before she attended a seminar. The leader team was unwilling to accept these responsibilities, and returned the PSB materials.

2) A Lilly-targeted school closed after PSB leaders had implemented a *Parents Sharing Books* program for one year.

3) Fifteen leaders tried to implement PSB programs for two consecutive school years, but were unable to generate parent interest. They chose not to try again.

4) PSB leaders in six schools actually implemented very successful PSB programs their first year. Leaders indicated that other responsibilities forced them to drop the PSB program the second year.

5) A principal informed the FLC staff that RIF (Reduction in Force) policies affected the school's PSB program. A faculty member moving into the vacated position did not assume the responsibilities for continuing with their school's PSB program.

6) A small percentage of principals (20%) indicated they were appreciative of programs like PSB, but finding time and people willing to take on these responsibilities was difficult.

7) One principal suggested that parents' rejections of modern adolescent literature used in the schools and other related reading programs caused teachers to be apprehensive about implementing programs like PSB.

EVALUATING PSB

Evaluation Design

Questions for the PSB evaluation were "What information and materials do leaders feel necessary to implement a successful PSB program?" "What benefits does PSB provide parents and students?" "Does sharing books improve parent/child relationships and communication?" Leader questionnaires, parent and student surveys, and case-study interviews with leaders, parents, and students were used to collect information about the *Parents Sharing Books* program.

Data Collection from Questionnaires/Surveys

After completing the PSB parent meetings, leaders were asked to return leader questionnaires to the Family Literacy Center. About 71% of these PSB leaders provided some type of feedback about their PSB program, such as completed questionnaires, phone responses, post-cards, or information collected from staff visits to sites.

Parent and student surveys were used to determine reactions to the program, obtain comments and suggestions for improvement, and discover what benefits parents and children received from sharing books. Although leaders were encouraged to provide parents and students with these surveys, there was no requirement to return the completed surveys.

Leaders were asked to collect and return pre- and post-survey information from parents and students to the Family Literacy Center. Pre- and post-survey data were collected from thirty-eight (47%) of the PSB sites. Leader teams indicated difficulties in collecting survey information from parents and students. These comments, for example, came from PSB leaders:

> *Collecting the information you [PSB staff] want about PSB is something I personally don't enjoy doing. When I hand surveys to parents and students, it just takes something away from what I'm trying to do....I want to take the authority and stiffness out of our parent meetings and surveys make it appear like we're testing and judging.*
>
> *I'm happy to talk to you [PSB staff] about my PSB program, and share with you the benefits that it has had on parents and students, but I don't do the evaluation surveys like you ask. If I handed surveys to my group of parents, they wouldn't come back. Things like this are intimidating for my parents....I know they are getting something from PSB when they continually return for meetings.*
>
> *Some parents ask to take the surveys home to complete. Naturally, I encourage them to return these forms to me, but sometimes I never see them again.*
>
> *I've had parents who have made it to every meeting except the meeting when we collected surveys! It takes time to run these parents down and ask them to return the forms.*

Kids aren't very good at doing surveys. They just don't give them much thought. Parents in our group were shocked and disappointed when they saw how little effort kids put into their surveys....One parent commented to her daughter, "Is that all you said?" That's just kids at this age! Now if they didn't like the program, they wouldn't be shy about telling us! Admitting they liked or enjoyed PSB might not be acceptable among their peers!

Students didn't participate in our meetings. I didn't feel it was appropriate for them to complete a survey.

As a result the FLC staff:

1) initiated phone calls, site visits, and case study interviews to gather additional information about the benefits of PSB. Principals', leader teams', parents', and students' comments and stories are used throughout this report. Case stories of PSB participants are appended in this report.

2) emphasized the importance of evaluation for local PSB programs during training seminars. Evaluation may be used to gather support from administration and the community, seek support for PSB books, and improve local PSB programs.

3) developed an incentive plan to encourage leaders to collect and return their survey information. Leaders were provided additional books when they returned PSB survey information.

PSB staff discussed possible incentives that might have influenced leader commitment and responsibility for returning evaluation. The original PSB proposal did not include stipends for leaders. A monetary reimbursement for each PSB leader who conducted PSB parent meetings, and carried out all PSB responsibilities might have motivated leaders. Monetary compensation might have influenced more Lilly-targeted schools to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project.

Providing PSB leaders with stipends may affect how schools regard parent programs and result in stronger commitments from teachers and administrators. Perhaps when organizing and conducting a parent program is regarded as a beneficial extra-curricular activity that receives the same respect and financial support as other extra-curricular activities in schools do, then teachers might be willing to assume more of the responsibility for enhancing home-school relationships.

PSB Leader Questionnaire

As part of the PSB evaluation, personnel assessed the leaders' successes in implementing their PSB programs, and leaders' recommendations for improving the PSB program. Throughout the PSB project, the quality of training that leaders received was a major concern. Leaders were asked to provide information after completing their *Parents Sharing Books* program about the following: 1) PSB materials; 2) PSB training; 3) PSB Bookshelf; and 4) benefits of PSB.

About 92% of the leaders who returned their completed questionnaires responded positively to the materials and training they received at the PSB seminars. Their questionnaires provided information that continues to inspire changes and improvements in the training manual and

operational procedures. Feedback from PSB leaders provided a framework for continually rethinking the manual so that leader teams may be given effective training material and instruction. Leader teams indicated the need for explicit plans and directions for implementing a parent involvement program and presenting parent training. This comment, for example, came from one PSB leader:

> *Now that I have had my first parent meeting, I would like to see the manual organized [according to] how I will have to use it at the local level. I would like to see each parent meeting laid out like a lesson plan for me and all the materials I need for each meeting right there in each specific meeting. Condense the information enough [so as] to be clear and relevant while covering the main ideas adequately in a short time frame. Provide me with extra information to expand my background, but not necessarily information that I need to present at parent meetings.*

In restructuring some of the materials and training, leader teams were provided additional material, such as agendas, leader guides, handouts, activities, and transparencies for each parent meeting.

Leaders remarked about problems (such as getting PSB started at home, choosing the right book, and positive ways to motivate children to share books at home) they needed more help with when training parents. Leaders' comments emphasized some of these needs:

> *Parents need help with choosing books to share with their children. I need to know about specific books that kids this age are interested in reading.*

> *I appreciated listening to parents talk about how they went home and got PSB started. Letting parents talk is a good idea; I learned a lot just from the sharing we did in our PSB group.*

> *I would like some suggestions that I can share with parents about ways to help their children improve their reading. This is really a concern for some parents in our group.*

Their comments helped to focus our attention on developing specific activities that could provide additional assistance to parents. As a result, the project staff added information and activities, such as positive remarks parents can use to get their children interested in sharing books, effective listening techniques, suggestions for choosing books, to the PSB manual and training.

Leader teams also contributed valuable feedback about the PSB Bookshelf. Their comments provided insight as to why some books were popular and/or unpopular with parents:

> *The parents and children really enjoyed the books in the PSB Bookshelf.*

> *It's sometimes difficult to get parents and children to read books about different people and other cultures. I need books that are similar to my parents' and students' lives so they can get interested in reading. Then maybe the multi-*

cultural books will seem more appealing to them once the enthusiasm for reading is there.

Some of the books everyone enjoyed and wanted to read, and some of them no one took out. I really think it is the difference in reading interests.

The books in this bookshelf didn't interest anyone in our group. I had to get other books that met their reading interests.

Good readers in the group had already read some of the books that were on the PSB Bookshelf. They were encouraged to look elsewhere for books to share.

Some parents looked for books their entire family could enjoy together. This was more difficult to find on the PSB Bookshelf.

There were books on the PSB Bookshelf that I wasn't too sure parents wanted their children reading. These books used language that I know wasn't acceptable at home. I felt they [parents] liked being able to decide what books they would share with their children.

I was concerned that parents were choosing books they thought their children ***should*** *be reading; books like the classics and things that parents read when they were this age.*

I don't shy away from putting books on my PSB Bookshelf that might be rather controversial and perhaps shocking to some parents. I felt these books were opportunities to educate and inform parents about some of the things their own children might be experiencing at this age....I don't force these books on parents, but I don't remove them either. The choice is theirs.

I had to get books that the poorer readers in our group could read. One of the participants in our group was a teacher who worked with special kids. She was very helpful in bringing books that kids with poorer reading skills could read and enjoy. This was very helpful.

Most parents would like to shield their teenagers from situations in which they must ask difficult questions and act in difficult circumstances. But in the real world people must learn to face difficult situations, ask appropriate questions, seek answers, and accept consequences. Teenagers who are unable to accomplish these tasks are not likely to become successful adults. Adolescents can share their problems with the characters in young adult books and discover that they are not alone. Leaders can encourage parents to use young adult literature to broaden their teenagers' perspectives on the world.

The project staff made these adjustments in the PSB training seminars and manual in regard to a PSB Bookshelf:

1) PSB leaders were encouraged to become familiar with the books that were on the PSB Bookshelf.

2) PSB leaders were encouraged to inform parents about today's adolescent literature; discuss the concerns parents may have about adolescent literature, but also make parents aware of the value of sharing these types of books with their children. PSB leaders can help parents see that situations in books might be used as opportunities to talk with their own children about sensitive topics and concerns.

3) PSB leaders were encouraged to add books that suited their parent groups to their original PSB Bookshelf.

4) The PSB manual included additional information for PSB leaders about handling controversial issues in books.

5) The first PSB Bookshelf supplied leaders with 50 books; there were 25 titles and 2 copies of each title. To provide a diversity of reading levels and topics, PSB leaders were given 50 different titles in subsequent workshops.

6) PSB leaders who earned bonus books were able to select their own books from a list.

7) PSB leaders were asked to make suggestions for the PSB Bookshelf about books that students and parents would enjoy.

Responses from PSB leaders' questionnaires indicated that 92% of the leaders who implemented a PSB program felt positive about the program, appreciated the staffs' efforts to inform them of positive approaches for promoting book sharing at home, and said the program increased leaders' awareness of parents' interest in sharing positive reading experiences with their children. One PSB leader, for example, made this comment:

> *I have found this to be a very rewarding experience for me professionally and personally. It has been very rewarding to see students in my class become excited about reading and sharing books with me and their parents....I have gotten to know students' parents whom I wouldn't have had the opportunity to meet had it not been for this program. We came together in such positive ways that it encourages me to continue with my PSB program.*

Leader teams who indicated problems with the PSB program commented that the most difficult thing about the program was getting parents involved, and getting parents to take time to share with their children. PSB leaders reported:

> *Our biggest problem is getting the parents here. (Your manual has everything but the parents!) It's difficult coordinating a convenient time for all parents to meet. Those parents who have tried to come to most of our meetings and have tried to share at home are finding the program is worthwhile. They came to the meetings with positive attitudes and wanted this [PSB] to work.*

I appreciated the parents who did participate in our PSB program, but I am concerned that parents whose children could really benefit from this program never come to things like this.

Many of the parents in our group have always been involved in their children's activities. We are all looking for THE answer or THE approach that will get parents involved in programs like PSB...we want to reach parents who have NEVER been involved before.

Our group was very small, but it was an enthusiastic group. The people in our group were volunteers; they came because they wanted to come to PSB. I'll take the 7 or 8 enthusiastic parents I had over 30 passive participants any day.

Parents who are involved early-on with their children's education tend to remain involved as their children move from one grade level to the next. Studies indicate that parents who experienced difficulties in school as children tend to feel uncomfortable participating in school activities as adults. PSB leaders may need to reconsider where they hold their PSB meetings. Scheduling PSB meetings at local restaurants, public libraries, church gathering rooms, and community centers may provide neutral grounds and more comfortable environments for parents who are reluctant to become involved. In addition, leaders may want to consider arranging PSB meetings at times that will accommodate single parents' and working families' schedules and responsibilities. A PSB leader commented about the arrangements she made for her PSB meetings:

I held my first PSB meeting in the school library. It was too stiff...and it placed me in an authority position. I wanted a different atmosphere....I took our PSB meetings to a local restaurant that provided us with a room and drinks. I think parents liked the feeling that was created by taking it outside the school building.

Leaders must initiate approaches that will involve parents who are not able to participate in programs like *Parents Sharing Books*. A PSB leader shared with us how she was able to involve parents in her school who were unable to come to PSB meetings:

I know I have parents who live in the projects who are unable to come to our meetings....The dialogue journals that I use in my classroom have enabled those parents to participate in my PSB program....I have never seen some of my parents, but they are communicating with me and their children through the PSB dialogue journals....I must consider the types of parents in my community, and work to see that I involve them in ways that are beneficial and practical.

It is realistic to assume that not every parent will actively participate in parent activities at school, but the attitudes and perspectives that characterized successful PSB leaders might provide models for other leaders. PSB leaders commented

My persistence or maybe stubborness has finally paid off! I have two students (brothers in 5th grade and 7th grade) who have a lot of trouble reading. Their parents have always been difficult to reach and to involve in parent activities of

any kind. I was determined to continue to send notes home and call to encourage them to come to PSB meetings, but to no avail. Until...I was pleasantly surprised by their presence at our last PSB meeting. They [parents] participated and were very excited. This was an encouraging experience for me, and I know it's this determination to involve parents that will eventually pay off.

I don't look for ways to quit or reasons to hang something up. I feel there is always something else I can try to get parents involved, and kids reading.

As a result of leaders' comments about recruiting parents, the project staff included in the manual some ideas leaders shared with us during seminars, site visits, and presentations. PSB leaders and the project staff suggested that

1) PSB meetings might be held at the public library; this introduces parents to another source of reading materials; parents can receive library cards, and librarians become friendly faces that can help parents with book selections.

2) church and community leaders can become avenues for reaching parents, students, and members of the extended family. For some families, the church is a strong influence and cornerstone of the family. Sharing the goals and purposes of PSB, for example, with church- and youth leaders may be an opportunity to reach more parents.

3) administrators might establish "Parent Coordinator" positions within school districts to organize PSB programs and other parent education programs. These positions might be held by non-certified staff who work only with parent groups.

4) several PSB teams be trained in a school so that PSB groups can meet at different times of the day. A PSB parent group might meet for coffee and rolls in the morning or a PSB "brown bag" lunch meeting at noon. Some parents might be willing to come immediately after work at 5:00, or another group might meet at 7:00 in the evening. PSB leaders must consider parents' schedules and responsibilities when arranging times.

Parent/Student Surveys

Information was collected from parents and students who participated in a *Parents Sharing Books* program. The parent/student surveys focused on the benefits that PSB provided parents and students. From these surveys, it was possible to learn how the program changed book-sharing behaviors and influenced family communication at home.

The Parent Surveys and Student Surveys consisted of a pre- and post-survey. Parents and students were surveyed at the first and last meeting of their PSB program. The questionnaires designed for parents and students, respectively, are in Appendices B, C, D, and E.

Parent Pre-Survey Data

In the pre-survey, parents were asked to respond to seven questions that asked for twelve items of information. These questions asked for parents' perspectives about their reading habits and their parent/child communication at home. They were also asked to give their reasons for attending the *Parents Sharing Book*s program. **Table III** shows parents' reasons for participating in the PSB program.

Table III: PARENTS' REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN PSB (n = 387)

Parent Response(s):	%
Opportunity to share with child	49%
Opportunity to encourage reading	38%
Improve child's reading	35%
Child asked parent to participate	21%
Improve parent/child communication	19%
Opportunity to share with other parents	2%
Enjoyed PSB last year	2%
Suggested by other PSB participant(s)	1%

Parents' responses indicated they participated in PSB because they were interested in spending time with their children. Parents might have felt that PSB provided such an opportunity. These parents might be aware that the critical stage of adolescence can influence family communication, and they see PSB as an opportunity to share with their children and to enhance family relationships.

Three questions on the pre-survey asked parents about their present reading attitudes and habits. **Table IV** shows that parents valued reading before participating in PSB, but their responses indicated they didn't have a set time for reading at home:

Table IV: PARENTS' ATTITUDES AND HABITS BEFORE PSB (n = 387)

Questions:	YES	NO
Do you ever read to one another at home?	58%	39%
Do you like to read?	81%	11%
Do you have a set time for reading at home?	21%	76%

Responses indicated that parents had positive attitudes about reading before participating in PSB, but they did not set time aside for reading at home. Even though parents may value reading and understand the importance of reading at home, they may not have established habits of reading at home. Parents may be encouraging their children to read at home, but may not be modeling positive reading habits for their children. Working parents, single parents, increased activities outside the home, homework, and other family- and work- related responsibilities may be factors that make it more difficult for families to set time aside for reading at home. Comments, such as the following, revealed parents' perspectives on reading at home:

> *I used to read a lot, but my job and other activities have affected this habit. I mostly have time to read magazines and newspapers. I would like to get back to reading more for pleasure...I really enjoy reading like this.*
>
> *I read all day long at my job. To be real honest, it's hard to come home and read more. I know I should and maybe PSB will help me do this.*
>
> *We enjoy reading, but I never thought about doing it together or sharing it. We always read to the kids when they were little, but we have gotten away from it as they started to read on their own. This [PSB program] will make us set time aside to read together.*
>
> *We could just as easily turn off the TV and read together as opposed to continuing to watch just TV. It's funny how we forget that other things besides TV can offer entertainment. Reading at home instead of watching TV is going to take some effort, but I think it's something everyone in our family can benefit from. I know that the responsibility is with me to get this started, and some days are harder than others to make the effort!*
>
> *I love to read, and I thought my child would eventually learn to enjoy reading. I realize that he isn't going to do this on his own. I've got to try something to interest him in reading, and I think this [PSB] will make me do it.*

These comments reinforce our assumptions that parents value reading and want their children to value reading also. But parents may need some guidance and support when trying to change reading habits at home and motivate other members in the family to read.

Student Pre-Survey Data

Similar information was requested of students participating in the PSB program. The pre-survey required students to respond to five questions that asked for ten items of information. These questions asked for information about parents' and children's reading and discussion habits, and students' reasons for participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Almost 92% (N=321) of the students provided reasons for participating in the PSB program. **Table V** shows that students also indicated that PSB was an opportunity to spend time with their parents. There is slight evidence from student responses that as the *Parents Sharing Books* program gains momentum in schools, students and parents may be influenced by others who have participated in PSB.

Table V: STUDENTS' REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN PSB (n = 321)

Student Response(s)	%
Opportunity to spend time with parent(s)	76%
Like to read	25%
Want to like reading	11%
Opportunity to improve reading	11%
Encouraged by parent(s)	9%
Like PSB leader(s)	3%
Encouraged by peers	2%

Both parents' and children's comments suggested an interest in and willingness to establish home reading habits and behaviors that encourage positive experiences for parents and children. Regardless of their present reading habits, most parents and children who responded to this pre-survey recognized that *Parents Sharing Books* was an opportunity to spend time with each other.

Students were asked to respond to questions that provided information about their reading attitudes and habits. **Table VI** shows that students who participated in PSB generally liked reading, but indicated that most of their reading was done to complete assignments.

Table VI: STUDENTS' READING ATTITUDES AND HABITS BEFORE PSB (n = 321)

	YES	NO
Do you like to read?	56%	17%

Why do you read?
(Students circled as many choices as appropriate)

For information	39%
To complete assignments	55%
For pleasure	37%

There was evidence that students who participated in PSB enjoyed reading, but perhaps found the responsibility for completing school assignments more of a priority than reading for pleasure.

Recent research at both the national and state levels indicates a declining interest and slowing development in reading through the junior high and senior high school grades (Farr, Fay, Myers, and Ginsberg, 1987; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Aside from the common activity of "round-robin" reading from texts, reading occupies only approximately 6% of class time in elementary school, 3% in junior high school, and 2% in senior high school (Goodlad, 1984).

According to Chall (1983), "students demonstrate gains in reading during the early years... these gains seem to taper off in the middle and upper grades, and seem to decline during the high school years." Elementary children's enthusiam for reading exceeds that of adolescent and young adult readers. The peak of reading interest often occurs around age 12; that is also the age when many readers lose interest in books.

Thomson (1988) suggests several reasons for this decline. Adolescent readers are often required by schools or pushed by parents to read books for which they are not emotionally and intellectually ready. Many adolescents may have difficulty finding books with young characters who face the problems of adolescence. Some parents, teachers, and librarians might be unaware of appropriate books to recommend. Some adults discourage adolescents from selecting books on certain topics or themes of interest. Reading is not accepted by some adolescent peer groups.

It is during this stage of their children's development that parents can provide significant help and guidance. Without the help of parents, adolescents frequently quit reading. Parents who know their adolescent children and who are acquainted with young adult literature can share with their youngsters books that will meet their needs and help them become mature adult readers.

Parent/Adolescent Pre-Survey Discussion Practices

In both parent and adolescent pre-surveys, respondents were asked, "Do you presently discuss any of the following with your child or parent?" Parent/child discussions can be about: News, School Work, Books, Magazines, and Personal Concerns. The responses were: *Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely*, or *Never*.

Tables VII and **VIII** show the types of discussions that parents and students most frequently had before participating in *Parents Sharing Books*. Both parents and students indicated that most of their parent/adolescent discussions were about school work and personal concerns. These numbers appear higher than what most studies report about parent and adolescent interaction with school work. However, these figures may reflect the background of the parents and students who were involved in the program. Participants volunteered to join PSB, probably indicating a higher-than-average interest in ways to promote their children's school success.

Table VII: PARENTS' RESPONSE TO PARENT/ADOLESCENT DISCUSSION PRACTICES BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN PSB. (N = 387)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	36.7	41.3	8.3	11.6	1.6	0.5
School Work	82.4	17.1	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Books	6.2	18.6	32.0	40.3	2.8	0.0
Magazines	4.7	14.7	22.5	47.0	11.1	0.0
Personal Concerns	61.4	26.1	4.8	1.6	0.5	0.8

Table VIII: STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO PARENT/ADOLESCENT DISCUSSION PRACTICES BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN PSB. (N = 321)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	32.1	47.4	5.9	14.6	3.6	0.0
School Work	71.3	19.3	2.6	5.8	1.5	0.0
Books	11.5	20.9	28.3	32.4	6.9	0.0
Magazines	4.0	3.4	33.6	37.4	21.5	0.0
Personal Concerns	36.1	28.7	16.5	10.0	5.3	3.4

Parent Profile

The PSB staff received 387 pre-surveys from parents, and 283 post-surveys were returned. The parent post-survey consisted of eight questions that asked for fourteen items of information. These questions asked for information about parents' and children's reading habits, attitudes, and interactions after participating in PSB. Parents were asked to write additional comments about PSB.

Parent Post-Survey Data

Although the main purpose of the *Parents Sharing Books* project was to increase interaction between parents and middle school children through books, a secondary purpose was to encourage parents and adolescents to share ideas during a critical stage in their relationship. Almost 92% (N=283) of the parents who responded to the survey felt they and their adolescents benefited

from the *Parents Sharing Books* program. These parents remarked that PSB helps parents' reading skills, expands family reading interests, encourages families to set time aside for reading, and helps parents become aware of their children's reading interests. They emphasized the importance of reading with their children at any age. Their comments indicated they valued the time they spent together sharing ideas. Parents reported

> *This [PSB] program opened a line of communication between us; a common denominator. It also let my son know that I care enough for him to get involved with his work.*
>
> *This [PSB] program increased our ability to communicate in a more meaningful way. This program was especially on time for us. Communication was at an all time low, and this program has certainly helped open our line of communication with each other.*
>
> *I didn't realize the enjoyment my daughter and I had missed before this [PSB] program. We laughed and cried at the books we read. We shared our thoughts and feelings on lots of 'touchy' issues. I'm very grateful for this program. We will continue to read together!*
>
> *I realized I didn't listen enough [to my child]. This [PSB] is something we can do and not quarrel about.*
>
> *It allowed us to look at each other not as a child and a mother, but as people who have opinions and values and expectations. Our relationship changed. This [PSB program] has provided an area of equality for us. We can relate with each other on a little more equal basis. It hasn't been a mother-daughter situation where both of us are trying to win or be right.*

One parent revealed that parents are very interested in their children's programs and progress, and rely on teachers to help them. This mother commented:

> *I was very concerned about my son's comprehension. He can read, but he has a difficult time recalling what he has read and his grades showed this. I was concerned and sent several letters to his teacher, but got no response. I called the school and the secretary told me about this [PSB] program. We decided to try it, and it has helped. It's made me see how I can help him with his problem and his grades have improved. It's too bad more parents don't take advantage of programs like this.*

Only a few parents (6%) indicated that PSB did not benefit them, because:

1) they were already reading with children.

2) the [PSB] program was targeted for an inappropriate age level. Some parents commented that PSB should be implemented in the elementary schools: "It's too late by the time they get to middle school."

3) they were unable to find time to read with their children.

4) they were unable to select books that both they and their children could enjoy.

Other parents commented:

1) *I feel this is a good program, but it didn't reach the parents that need it. We already read, and students who are not already avid readers could be motivated through a program such as this if those parents would just get involved.*

2) *It was good to share, but we prefer reading materials that are not as lengthy and can be read in segments with no time period involved. This took lots of time.*

3) *I feel that the younger children would benefit more from this program. The third and fourth grades would be an ideal age to target.*

4) *Not this year, because there just wasn't enough time due to family matters. However, last year I felt we benefited from PSB.*

5) *Frankly, my child isn't interested in reading the kind of books I like to read, and I don't enjoy reading his type of books. We just can't get together on what we can share.*

6) *My child and I honestly chose a book which turned out not to be of interest [to us]. With the initial choice made poorly, we were reluctant to choose another book. I feel we did not give the program an honest try. I would like to participate again and learn more about choosing books to share. I encourage others to do the same.*

7) *PSB created pressure to read books at home.*

Many children are pressured to read. It is difficult for parents to encourage young people to read without pressuring them. The line between the two is thin, but encouragement has some characteristics that help to distinguish it from pressure. In an encouraging atmosphere, a wide variety of reading material is available. Adolescents are allowed to select their own reading materials. Parents are aware of their adolescents' interests and needs and seek books addressing these. Young adult books are readily available. Adults pay more attention to the fact that youngsters are reading than to what they are reading.

Adults who enjoy reading and read a lot, often have techniques for selecting books. PSB leaders must emphasize to parents that young adults may not have developed book-selection skills; therefore, they may not be able to choose appropriate books to meet their expectations and interests. Adolescents who are unable to find enjoyable books sometimes quit reading. Leaders can suggest to parents that they may need to consider letting the interests of children prevail upon their own reading interests in order to motivate their children to read.

PSB leaders can also inform parents that it is okay to quit a book that is not interesting: After all, it is the enjoyment of a good story that motivates the reader to read more. Leaders can provide parents with more individual assistance when selecting books and providing activities that can help parents and adolescents become aware of their reading interests.

Leaders reported that they encouraged parents to share magazines, newspapers, comic books, and other reading material with their children. A leader commented:

> *One parent was having difficulty getting her son to read anything with her. The mother mentioned that her son was really into sports. I suggested that his interest in sports could be used to get him to share things he was reading about in his sports magazine or the sports page of the newspaper. The mother tried this, and said this suggestion was helpful. It allowed them to try other reading materials besides books, and it did encourage her son to read and share with her.*

Parents may need help discovering acceptable reading material for their adolescents. Sometimes magazines or comic books are of interest to adolescents when books are not. Sometimes teenagers are more willing to accept paperbacks than hardcover books, which may look too much like textbooks. If a teenager is interested in cars, parents might try to find books and magazines about cars and auto mechanics.

Student Profile

Comparable information was requested of students who participated in the program. The PSB staff received 321 pre-surveys from students, and 186 post-surveys were returned. The student post-survey consisted of eight questions that asked for twelve items of information. These questions asked for students' perceptions of their reading habits, attitudes, and interactions with their parents after participating in PSB. Students were asked to write additional comments about PSB.

Student Post-Survey Data

Approximately 89% of the students (N=186) indicated they benefited from participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* project. Their comments indicated that parents listened to them when they talked about books, they liked how they were spending time with their parents, they were talking more with their parents, and they felt this was helping adolescents and parents understand each other better. A few students commented that they felt their reading was improving, and they were reading more.

A few of the students (10%) felt that PSB didn't benefit them. These students remarked that they didn't find time to read at home, they couldn't get parents to do PSB with them, and some commented that they were already reading at home.

In addition to these questions, students were asked to respond in the post-survey to the question, "Do you think the PSB program has done any of the following?" The choices were

1) Improved communication with my parents

2) Increased my desire to read alone

3) Increased my desire to read and talk with my parents

4) Increased my appreciation of reading

5) Not affected me at all

Students could check all that applied. **Table IX** shows how students felt about PSB.

Table IX: STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE BENEFITS OF PSB (n = 186)

Do you think the PSB program has done any of the following?

Improved communication with my parents	67%
Increased my desire to read alone	42%
Increased my desire to read and talk with my parents	54%
Increased my appreciation of reading	48%
Has not affected me at all	12%

Over half of the students felt the program improved communication with their parents, and they felt it increased their desire to read and talk with their parents. A teenager shared this about her book-sharing experiences with her mother:

> *I enjoy reading aloud with my mom now. When I don't understand parts in the book, she is right there to help me understand it better. She gives me a lot of answers, she listens to my opinion, and I listen to her opinion. Sometimes we don't agree, but at least we hear both sides now.*

Other children who participated in PSB have been able to discuss problems they have with reading. A student felt that reading with her mother helped her reading ability:

> *Before I read books with my mom, I would just skip over the words I didn't know or couldn't pronounce. I wouldn't look them up or ask anyone what they meant. Now when we come to a word that I don't understand or can't pronounce while we're reading, I ask my mom. It's easy to ask when she is right beside you. I think knowing what the word means helps me understand what I'm reading.*

Other teenagers commented:

> *I don't like to read. I usually quit a book before I get to the good part. My mom usually starts reading the book so we are able to get to the good part. I like reading to her once we get into the book. Reading together has helped me enjoy reading more.*

I know that I have to read to get better, but when you don't like to read it's hard. My mom reads with me and then tells me she has noticed improvement in my reading.

Reading with my mom isn't work. She doesn't care that she does most of the reading. She lets me read when I want to do the reading. This has made me feel like she really wants to read together for fun—not for practice.

When children are able to discuss their problems and feelings about reading, they have admitted that a reading problem exists. Many young people, once they have admitted that reading is a problem, or that some types of reading are more difficult than others, are willing to try to improve their reading skills. Parents can encourage them and express their appreciation for even the smallest achievement in reading ability. Bruno Bettelheim says that if young readers are allowed to develop reading skills naturally, in supportive environments, and without undue pressure, they are likely to develop into adults who enjoy reading for pleasure.

Parents indicated that book-sharing experiences that started out with a parent and adolescent reading together evolved into a family reading experience. A parent commented:

The two of us [mother and son] started out reading, but eventually our entire family got involved. Everyone in the family would sit and listen to the book. This experience made us realize how much fun it was to get back to reading...TV takes away from the imagination.

Listening to stories and books read orally helps young people develop their ability to imagine. Hearing books read aloud helps adolescents move from the artificial images of TV to more demanding reading material that requires a well developed ability to imagine.

One parent who participated in PSB indicated that when she and her daughter started reading together, she became aware that her daughter had never finished a book. She commented:

I knew that my daughter had books in her room and would read, but it surprised me when she told me that she had never finished a book. I decided that PSB could help us read books together. I think children need that sense of accomplishment when they finish a book. Finishing a good book encourages you to read more.

Reading aloud enables adults to share stories with youngsters who do not yet read well enough to read books on their own. Adolescents can participate when great works of literature are read orally. Parents' inflection and emphasis allow the adolescent to put meaning to words and stories too complex for silent reading.

For some adolescents, a book they hear read aloud may be the first book they have "read" all the way through. The sense of accomplishment that comes from reading an entire book, even if it is read to the adolescent, can be enough to create a positive attitude toward reading. Sharing books and listening to someone read aloud may be the experience that opens new reading doors.

Parents'/Adolescents' Discussion Practices

Parents and adolescents were asked to respond in their post-surveys to the same question they were asked in the pre-survey, "Do you presently discuss any of these with your child/parent?" Discussions with parents and adolescents concerned: News, School Work, Books, Magazines, and Personal Concerns. Possible responses were: *Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely*, or *Never*. **Table X** through **XIV** show the comparison of the pre- and post-survey information that parents and children provided about their discussion habits before and after participating in PSB.

Table X: PARENTS'/ADOLESCENTS' PRE/POST-SURVEY INFORMATION FOR DISCUSSING *NEWS*

	Parent		Child	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Daily	36.7	39.4	32.1	36.4
Weekly	41.3	48.1	47.4	48.1
Monthly	8.3	4.6	5.9	4.6
Rarely	11.6	6.7	14.6	6.7
Never	1.6	1.2	3.6	4.2
No Comment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

News: Table X shows the changes that parents and adolescents made in discussing news with each other after participating in PSB. More than one third of the parents felt they discussed news with their children *daily* (39). Some change occurred for *weekly* (48%) discussions of news; however, there were fewer discussions for *monthly* (4%) and *rarely* (5%) responses.

More than one third of the students felt they discussed the news with their parents *daily* (36%); almost one half of the students said they discussed news with their parents *weekly* (48%). PSB did not cause a strong positive shift in parents' and adolescents' discussions about the news. Perhaps parents and adolescents don't see news, whether on TV or in newspapers, as a valuable sharing experience. It is possible that parents' and adolescents' perceptions of "news" might take on new meaning during this stage. "News" for parents might mean world, national, and state news; whereas adolescents' interpretation might be more contextual, and focus on activities and events that are taking place at home, school, or work.

Some adolescents are not excited about sharing their activities with parents. For some adolescents, discussing news may be reserved exclusively for peers and other friends, and sharing any kind of news with parents may be equated as intrusion.

Adolescence is a time of intense egocentrism. Some adolescents may view discussing news with their parents as part of the adult work, and actually reject it. For some adolescents, anything that appears to be adult is unacceptable. This problem usually decreases as the young person

grows older. Parents must avoid pushing; the more parents push teenagers toward activities and discussions, the more they will run from them.

Table XI: PARENTS'/ADOLESCENTS PRE/POST-SURVEY INFORMATION FOR DISCUSSING *SCHOOL WORK*

	Parent		Child	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Daily	82.4	89.2	71.3	89.2
Weekly	17.1	6.4	19.3	6.4
Monthly	0.0	1.8	2.6	1.8
Rarely	0.5	2.8	5.8	2.8
Never	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0
No Comment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

School Work: Table XI shows the changes in parents' and children's discussions over school work after participating in PSB. Almost 90% of the parents indicated they discussed school work with their children *daily* after participating in PSB. A positive shift from *weekly* (6%), *monthly* (2%), *rarely* (3%), and *never* (0%) to *daily* discussions appeared in the responses of parents. More parents discussed school work with their children daily after participating in PSB.

More students discussed school work with their parents after participating in PSB. A positive shift from *weekly* (16%), *monthly* (0%), *rarely* (1%), and *never* (0%) to *daily* discussions of school work appeared in children's responses. More students (84%) discussed school work *daily* with their parents after participating in PSB.

The figures for daily discussions of school work remain high for this particular group, and suggest the type of parents who are generally supportive of parent programs and activities like the *Parents Sharing Books* program. These figures suggested that many of the parents were interested in their children's academic life before participating in PSB. One parent commented:

> *This has been a great opportunity for my child and me to spend time together, but I am concerned that parents whose children would really benefit from a program like this never seem to attend things like this. This program really needs to reach those parents.*

A PSB leader reported:

> *The parents in our group already are very involved with their children. How can we get those other parents involved?*

Comments such as these from leaders and parents suggested that PSB staff and leader teams must consider approaches that will appeal to parents who are reluctant to become involved with school activities and programs that promote their children's success. Family agencies and community leaders are possible contacts that might assist the PSB staff in reaching out to more parents.

Leaders indicated that many of the parents who participated in PSB were already supportive of their children's school activities. Parents who become involved in their children's academic life during the primary years are more likely to continue to be involved in later years. This evidence suggests that parent involvement programs that reach parents who have pre-school age children can have sustaining effects that encourage parents to be involved throughout their children's academic life.

The figures in **Table XI** do not provide insight into the type or quality of parent/adolescent discussions about school work. Perhaps some parents and children might perceive that 'asking about homework' is comparable to 'discussing school work' daily. Such a perception might also contribute to the high responses in this category.

Table XII: PARENTS'/ADOLESCENTS' PRE/POST-SURVEY INFORMATION FOR DISCUSSING *BOOKS*

	Parent		Child	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Daily	6.2	31.1	11.5	35.5
Weekly	18.6	63.6	20.9	51.6
Monthly	32.0	2.5	28.3	7.0
Rarely	40.3	1.8	32.4	6.0
Never	2.8	1.1	6.9	0.0
No Comment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Books: Table XII shows the changes in parents' and children's discussions over books after participating in PSB. About one third of the parents said they discussed books with their children *daily* (31%); however, almost twice as many parents discussed books *weekly* (64%) with their children after participating in PSB. Positive shifts from *monthly* (3%), *rarely* (2%), and *never* (1%) to *daily* (31%) and *weekly* (64%) discussions appeared in the responses of parents. More parents positively changed these *daily* and *weekly* discussion practices with their children after participating in PSB.

Students indicated they shared books more with their parents after participating in PSB. Positive shifts from *monthly* (7%), *rarely* (6%), and *never* (0%) to *daily* (36%) and *weekly* (52%) discussions appeared in the responses of children. Students positively changed their *daily* and *weekly* discussion habits with their parents after participating in PSB.

Parents' and students' percentages moved in a positive and predicted direction. PSB brought parents and children together more often over more kinds of reading than before they entered the program. Some students indicated that sharing books with their parents was an enjoyable experience:

> *I was surprised when my mom wanted to read my books. I never thought she would do this. She thinks that my books are better than hers!*

> *I was really surprised that my mom would want to do this [PSB] with me. She usually works all the time, and I didn't think she would have time. Now, instead of doing the dishes and things like that, she sits and reads with me.*

A major concern that parents, and even adolescents, are faced with is how little time family members have for each other. PSB leaders indicated that it was not unusual for their students to go home to an empty house, eat a sandwich, then leave the home to do other things. A household with a working parent or parents is the norm rather than the exception. Many adolescents are involved in after-school activities or have jobs. Busy schedules prevent families from spending quality time together.

Parents indicated that reading young adolescent books helped them to sharpen their reading skills and to appreciate the types of books their children were interested in reading. One parent shared this about her reading experience:

> *I find myself reading more and enjoying the same books my daughter enjoys reading. I joined this [PSB] group so that my daughter would enjoy reading, but I'm benefiting, too. I'm a better reader, and I understand my child better.*

Another parent commented:

> *I know so much more about my daughter after reading these [young adult] books with her. I understand what kind of pressures she is faced with at school, and I have so much respect for her as a person. She has the strength and ability to resist some of these pressures placed on her at school and from other kids.*

Parents can read books written for young adults, and learn to better understand their adolescents. It is important to remember that youngsters during this stage of their development find enjoyment in books that help them seek answers to their difficult questions and curiosities.

This period of transition from childhood to young adulthood can be trying for adolescents and their parents. However, if parents provide a comfortable place of refuge and understanding, adolescents are likely to continue to look upon the family as a source of comfort and protection while seeking new roles in their ever-expanding world.

Table XIII: PARENTS'/ADOLESCENTS' PRE/POST-SURVEY INFORMATION ABOUT DISCUSSING *MAGAZINES*

	Parent		Child	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Daily	4.7	5.3	4.0	9.1
Weekly	14.7	27.2	3.4	17.7
Monthly	22.5	38.5	33.6	28.0
Rarely	47.0	21.6	37.4	37.6
Never	11.1	7.4	21.5	7.5
No Comment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Magazines: Table XIII shows the changes in parents' and adolescents' discussions over magazines after participating in PSB. Twice as many parents discussed magazines with their children *weekly* (27%) after participating in PSB, but only 5% of the parents indicated they were discussing magazines *daily* with their children. Nearly 40% of the parents felt they discussed magazines with their children *monthly*, only 22% of the parents *rarely* discussed magazines, and 7% of the parents *never* discussed magazines with their children after participating in PSB.

Students reported little change in sharing magazines with their parents *daily* (9%). Three times as many students reported they discussed magazines *weekly* (18%) with their parents; less than half (38%) of the students indicated they discussed magazines with their parents after participating in PSB.

Factors such as the availability of magazines in the home may have influenced the amount of time parents spent sharing magazines with their youngsters. Parents may not see magazines as pertinent to their young teens' academic life. Magazines may be something adolescents feel more comfortable sharing with their peers.

Parents should encourage a wide range of reading interests in teenagers. Many parents offer praise when their youngsters select classic adult works, but they may say little or even criticize when their children select other materials to read. It is important to remember that the aesthetic reader, who is becoming a mature adult reader, has a broad range of reading interests. The young adult who reads a Judy Blume novel over the weekend, picks up *Anne of Green Gables* in the library on Monday, and reads *Seventeen* magazine that evening is becoming an aesthetic reader. Parents should encourage all of these reading interests.

A great number of adolescents do not want to sit, and in some cases are incapable of sitting, for prolonged periods. Adolescence is one of the most physically active periods of life. Parents should keep this in mind when selecting or suggesting reading material. Magazines are good for young adolescents since the articles are short and are aimed at the egocentric reading needs of teenagers.

Table XIV: PARENTS'/ADOLESCENTS' PRE/POST-SURVEY INFORMATION ABOUT DISCUSSING *PERSONAL CONCERNS*

	Parent		Child	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Daily	42.6	72.8	36.1	72.8
Weekly	31.7	24.0	28.1	24.0
Monthly	8.1	0.4	16.5	0.4
Rarely	8.1	0.0	10.0	0.0
Never	4.4	0.0	5.3	0.0
No Comment	5.1	2.8	3.4	2.8

Personal Concerns: Table XIV shows the changes in parents' and adolescents' discussions over personal concerns after participating in PSB. Parents (73%) reported discussing personal concerns with their children after participating in PSB. Positive shifts from *weekly* (24%), *monthly* (4%), *rarely* (0%), and nonexistent (*never* 0%) to *daily* (66%) discussions appeared in the responses of parents. Parents positively changed their *daily* discussion practices (73%) with their children after participating in PSB. A parent commented about discussing personal concerns with her daughter:

> *I found it easier to talk to her about touchy situations. The books gave me the courage to bring up these difficult topics that every parent is concerned about.*

Another parent reported:

> *This was time just for the two of us. We looked forward to sharing at night just before going to bed. My daughter told me she had forgotten how much fun it was to have someone read to her!*

Students indicated they shared personal concerns more with their parents after participating in PSB. A positive shift from *weekly* (20%), *monthly* (5%), *rarely* (0%), and nonexistent (*never* 0%) to *daily* (66%) discussions appeared in the responses of students. More students discussed personal concerns (66%) with their parents after participating in PSB.

Students' and parents' increase in *daily* discussions of personal concerns resulted in an appropriate decrease in percentage of responses for *weekly, monthly, rarely,* and *never* responses during students' and parents' participation in Parents Sharing Books. All these percentages moved in a positive and predicted direction. PSB brought parents and adolescents together more often discussing personal concerns than before they entered the program. A student shared this about her PSB experience:

I feel comfortable asking my mom questions. I used to go to my friends and talk to them. Now I know my mom will listen to what I have to say, and we can talk about things we used to argue over.

Early adolescence is a period of potential inner conflict for adolescents, and this can often precipitate conflict between adolescents and adults. It is also an exciting time in which the restless energy of the teenager can be put to positive use. It is a time in which adolescents are willing to exert effort not only in the area of reading, but in the areas of personal development, interpersonal relationships, and social problems.

For some parents, the doors of conversation with their adolescents have been closed. Reading and sharing adolescent books can increase understanding and open doors to meaningful discussions. Young adult literature has the potential to guide teenagers as they strive to meet their growing needs for social affection and self-esteem and to help parents as they strive to understand their young adults.

Many young people grow into thinking, caring young adults during this period. Though parents may feel they have little influence on their teenagers, the examples they provide and the understanding they exhibit allow their relationships with their adolescents to mature. Overall, the concept of parents and children sharing books to increase family communication was well received by parents and children. All of us recognize the potential problems that arise when communication between parents and youngsters is limited to only a few minutes a day, especially when that communication is filled with instructions and directions. PSB helped parents and adolescents commit time to the family for book-sharing that strengthened their relationships. The Parents Sharing Books program can increase family reading, and can open up new lines of communication between parents and adolescents.

PARENTS SHARING BOOKS CASE REPORTS

The essence of the Parents Sharing Books project was not reflected solely through the surveys that were completed by PSB leaders, parents and children. Perhaps the most valuable portion of the evaluation came from interviews held with PSB participants. These interviews were used to gain rich detail about the leaders, parents, and children who participated in a *Parents Sharing Books* group. The purpose of these case-study reports was to understand: 1) the experiences of parents and middle school children who participated in successful *Parents Sharing Books* programs; 2) the techniques used by leader teams who implemented a *Parents Sharing Books* program; and 3) the reactions of teachers and parents to this type of parent involvement.

Site Selection for Case Studies

In selecting case studies to include in this report, project personnel considered school demographics (urban, suburban, and rural); school success with implementing a PSB program; and of course, the willingness of PSB participants to be interviewed. Letters were sent to fifteen schools explaining the purpose of the case-report evaluation and requesting their participation in telling their PSB stories. Twelve schools agreed to meet with the PSB staff person and share their project experiences. Twenty-six interviews were conducted with PSB leaders, principals, parents, and students.

These school sites were distributed across urban, suburban, and rural areas; had leader teams who implemented PSB in unique ways; and, in some instances, had leader teams who experienced difficulty in implementing PSB in their school. Leader teams, principals, parents, and students who were willing to participate in this evaluation were provided consent forms and interview protocols.

Data Collection

The methods used to collect data for these case reports were explained in a consent form (see Appendix F) so that each participant was aware that a case story would be written about his or her experience with the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Letters (see Appendix G and H) were sent to PSB leaders and participants explaining the purpose of the interviews and the procedures used for conducting the interviews.

Interviews with the parents, students, principals, and leader teams were tape recorded. Interviews took approximately sixty minutes for each respondent, and these interviews took place in the school library or in other convenient places within the school. Respondents were encouraged to ask questions at any time during the interview about the nature of the evaluation. Staff phone numbers were provided so that respondents could ask questions about concerns they might have after the interview was completed.

The terms for participating in the case report were the following: 1) real names were used during data collection. Respondents could request that pseudonyms be used in the written case report; 2) respondents gave their permission to be recorded, and information and statements from the audio tapes were used in publications and instructional materials for the *Parents Sharing Books* project; 3) respondents received copies of the case report before the final draft was

submitted, and they negotiated changes with the evaluator; and 4) the data collected from the interviews became the property of the Family Literacy Center.

Respondents were aware that their participation in this evaluation study was voluntary. They had the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason and without any prejudice. If they withdrew from the study prior to its completion, their data would be returned to them upon request or destroyed.

Format for Participants' Stories

The PSB case stories for this report were arranged into two sections: 1) PSB leaders and principals talking about their PSB programs and 2) parents and children discussing their *Parents Sharing Books* experiences. Within these two basic sections, the stories were separated into major ideas or themes (i.e., teamwork or adaptability of the program) that were reflected in the data we collected. Case-study stories were first appraised by two PSB staff members. Readers identified one or two major ideas represented in each case-study. These readers discussed each story to further determine the theme classification; then the story was classified so that it was most representative of a particular theme. Additional readers provided feedback.

Respondents received a draft of their case-study story. The respondents were asked to read their stories, and provide feedback about the content and theme classification (see Appendix I). PSB staff made telephone contacts to discuss each respondent's story, and to negotiate changes. The respondents returned their stories to the Family Literacy Center with their changes. Once changes were made, another PSB staff member conducted a final reading of the stories.

PSB Leaders' and Principals' Stories

In the first section of stories (Appendix J, K, and L), three themes emerged from our conversations with PSB leaders and principals. These themes are 1) teamwork and support; 2) adaptability of PSB; and 3) attitudes and perspectives that influenced PSB's success. It is our opinion that these themes reflected the local leadership that influenced the effectiveness of PSB programs.

1) **Teamwork and Support (see Appendix J):** PSB leaders discussed the support they received from principals and other PSB participants when they were implementing their PSB programs. These leaders talked about a 'team' effort that was essential for initiating new PSB programs. Artis Hoffman, a PSB leader at McCulloch Middle School (Marion, Indiana), believed that the support she received from school administrators was a major factor in motivating her to achieve a successful PSB program:

> *When they [principals] see us going out of our way for the kids in our school, they go out of their way to support what we are doing. It really is a "give and take" situation here. Our principals set the tone for this building. They are caring, positive, and happy people. Mrs. Whitticker and Robin [assistant principal] have been very supportive of my Parents Sharing Books program. They certainly have gone out of their way in making me believe that it is a very worthwhile thing that I am doing. They have attended my meetings, and they are here for everything else that goes on in this school.*

Sue Miller, a PSB leader at Madison Junior High School (Madison, Indiana), indicated that benefits the parents and students received from participating in PSB encouraged her to continue reaching out to parents in her community:

> *The program has been very rewarding for me personally. I have seen what it has done for students in my classroom, and I have heard the stories parents share at our meetings. It is this experience as a PSB leader that makes me continue with the program. It is very rewarding to see students and parents appreciate reading and begin to grow into life-long readers—-people who enjoy reading for pleasure.*

2) **Adaptability of PSB (see Appendix K):** We believed that many leaders' personal ability to adapt PSB to their parents' and students' needs was a decisive factor in the success of their programs. Karen Lykens, a PSB leader at Wilson Middle School (Muncie, Indiana), shared with us how she used *Parents Sharing Books* as a component of her total parent involvement package:

> *I don't always run the programs the way they say I should in the manual. But this [PSB] program stands on its own. I take the information and ideas that are given to me and make them into a program that will fit my parents' and students' needs. I'm also involved in other Lilly projects, and I think this is why the [PSB] program has worked so well in our school. We have the math program, Parents Sharing Books, and Teachers under Cover. I make them all work together. I don't run parents and students into the school for separate meetings and activities. The parents can come in and take advantage of all this once a month; math and reading activities used in a variety of ways. Students take home the books that I read with the Teachers under Cover project, and they let their parents read them. I have kids picking out books that they think their parents will like from the PSB Bookshelf as well as the books from Teachers under Cover. These are examples of how two projects work together and complement what we are trying to accomplish here.*

3) **Attitudes and Perspectives that Influenced PSB's Success (see Appendix L):** From our interviews, it became obvious that attitudes and perspectives about parents' role in school and the schools' role in promoting positive parent involvement were critical in establishing positive home/school relationships. Jane was a PSB leader who made several unsuccessful attempts to get a PSB program started in her middle school. She talked about the school's and parents' attitudes in her community, and how the school interacted with parents. Jane's perspective was "Parents care, but not about the right things:"

> *We have PTA at the elementary school, but we don't have any type of parent involvement at the middle school. Parents in this community don't seem to want to get involved. They will come for athletic events, but they just won't come for anything that is educational....We have verbal announcements first thing in the morning to the students and then that's it. We do not send any type of bulletin or newsletter home to parents. The main reason for doing it this way is because so many of them [announcements/bulletins] don't get home. They [the school] feel it's a waste of time and paper.*

From a parent's perspective, this school's approach to disseminating school information and announcing school events led to poor home/school relationships. Mary was a parent who received PSB training and worked with Jane to implement a PSB program. Mary responded to the school's actions by saying that she wanted to continue to be involved with her child's education as her daughter moved from an elementary setting to the higher grades. This parent believed that the methods used for informing parents about what was happening at school was ineffective and insensitive:

> *I think that communication between the school and home is very poor. I can't explain why this is, but I am one parent who is interested in being a part of my daughter's education. I was here at open house not because I found out from my daughter remembering to tell me, but because I kept calling the school to find out when it was going to be held. I can understand how discouraging it must be to send information home that never gets home, but I also think there are interested parents out there like [my husband and me] are. If parents are not used to getting announcements or newsletters, it may be a case where parents don't think to ask for information every day that has been given to children.*

Sally Davis made several attempts to implement PSB in her school. Sally's perspective of her situation affirmed Jane's and some other PSB leaders' viewpoint:

> *Education and parent involvement aren't valued here [in this community] like they should be. Parents work at factories...these are pretty good paying jobs....This is starting to change because there aren't as many factory jobs available...Factories are using less and less people, some factories are moving out, and parents [in our community] are without jobs....I get the feeling that parents don't know how to be involved with the school and they are leaving their children's education to us....Often when parents do get involved with this school, it's because of sports or it is over a conflict or grievance they have with the school....because of this I think our faculty has an attitude about parent involvement....schools are afraid of parent involvement when it's this [negative] type.*

Those leaders who were successful in getting parents involved in their PSB programs indicated that offering parents positive programs such as PSB was a priority. They indicated that their background knowledge and experience in working with parents helped them to understand how to motivate parents to become involved with their children's education and to be empathetic to parents' circumstances. Patricia Lovelace of Tolleston Middle School (Gary, Indiana) shared her experience as a veteran teacher and advocate of PSB:

> *Every parent wants to know how their child is doing in school. That was the key to getting parents involved with PSB. I called every parent individually, and invited them. I made a positive phone call to parents—that's important. Don't wait till something bad happens; call parents when it's good!....I think it's the personal contact that I make with parents that makes my program work. They like being called for something positive, and enjoy being singled out to talk only about their child....I'm tired of hearing 'we don't have time.' It does*

take time [to contact parents individually and offer these programs], but I always have time when it comes to my kids—especially if it can help my kids.

Karen Lykens' (Wilson Middle School; Muncie, Indiana) and Deborah Bova's (Creston Junior High School; Indianapolis, Indiana) perspective was that parents care, but they can't always get involved. Both Karen and Deborah recognized that some parents in their urban schools had transportation problems. Deborah commented

We have students coming to our school who are bused here. They live in the projects and their parents just can't come to my PSB meetings....I still encourage them to participate in PSB with their children....I encourage my students to use their dialogue journals with their parents. When I read their dialogue journals, I make comments to the parents about what they are reading with their children. I invite them to every PSB meeting and offer a ride if they need one. They are involved in my PSB program, but in a very different way.

Karen had a similar situation:

Some of my parents weren't coming [to the PSB meetings] because of their transportation situation. They could use public transportation to get to the meetings, but were unable to use it to get home....I made sure these parents, who wanted to come to our meetings but couldn't find a way to get here, were able to find rides. I asked other parents and teachers who were coming to the meetings to give these parents a ride home. I gave parents and students rides....This effort got more parents to our meetings....Helping each other out brought us together as a group.

Sidenia Moses (Jones Middle School; Marion, Indiana) had a parent participate in her PSB program who helped her to understand how parents may sometimes feel:

I had a father participate in our PSB program who was just wonderful....He worked nights and came to PSB meetings during his dinner break. He joined our group because he felt he wanted to know how to communicate better with his daughter....He set such a wonderful example for other parents who are also looking for ways to help and communicate with their children, and for those parents who can't seem to find time for programs like this.

These PSB leaders' shared a perspective about parents: "Parents care, but circumstances may not allow them to get involved." They themselves believed that parents had the right attitudes toward PSB and parent involvement, but sometimes lacked the necessary resources to get involved and participate in PSB. PSB leaders' discussions suggested these resources as being 1) time; 2) transportation; and 3) information about how to help their children properly. Karen Lykens' initial approach to implementing PSB was to lay the "groundwork":

We can't always be calling with bad news. Parents can't believe it when I call them to let them know their children have done something well or have improved at school....I tell them that I want this to continue and I expect their support....We have to call parents when things are going well so that we can

call on them when we need their participation in programs like PSB....I tell my parents at meetings that I am going to offer PSB because I think it is worth my time and effort...I also tell them what I expect of them...I'm here and I expect them to be here, too.

Karen understood that her parents cared, but their expectations were inappropriate; parents had a narrow vision of their ability to provide appropriate support and reinforcement. Parents at this school expected to be contacted only for negative reasons, but they had a PSB leader who didn't leave them on the sidelines. She informed them of her expectations and explained how she and the parents could work together.

The stories that were collected from PSB leaders and principals communicated their sense of PSB and illuminated their broader perspectives about parents and parent involvement:

1) Parents care, but not about the right things.
2) Parents care, but lack of resources prevent them from getting involved.
3) Parents care, but their expectations are inappropriate.

Most teachers are aware of a number of things to encourage parent involvement with their children's education. Report cards, conferences, newsletters, workshops, and open houses are a regular part of the school year, but these parent involvement approaches in schooling are far more important for the support they offer schools and teachers. Intuitive PSB leaders like Karen indicated that parent programs like PSB are able to educate parents as well as enrich family relations. PSB participants indicated that the program offered something **extra** for parents and children; something that "directly" affected families. This comment, for example, came from one parent:

It [PSB] has given me an opportunity to get involved with Leslie in a very positive way. Our efforts in doing Parents Sharing Books affect us directly. Leslie and I benefit from it—it's just for us. It contributes to our relationship, which is different than most parent councils, school meetings, or advisory committees.

Perhaps these broader perspectives about parents and parent involvement will encourage educators to assume responsibility for initiating parent programs that enhance family relationships at home. Many parents look to teachers for ways in which they can generally foster reading and influence their children's success. Teachers like our PSB leaders seek resourceful and positive approaches that will invite parents to share books in meaningful ways with their children at home; they seek parent involvement that promotes family literacy and communication.

In most instances leaders were unable to comment about changes in students' performance in class, but a few commented that parents' and students' self-esteem and attitudes changed noticeably during their participation in PSB. One leader commented:

The program has positively affected both the parent's and the child's image they have of themselves at school. I have a parent participating in my program who has decided to do this [PSB] program for herself. She and her son are doing it, but she told me at one of our meetings, 'I don't care if he [son] wants

to quit or not. For the first time I'm enjoying the books I'm reading. I have actually finished books I am reading for the first time in my life. I am determined to read every one of them on your [PSB] bookshelf.' I don't think you people [PSB staff] realize the impact this program is making on parents and possibly other adults at home. Parents are reading and enjoying it for the first time!

Marjorie Gaines, a PSB leader from Bailly Middle School (Gary, Indiana) shared this:

You'd have to see my kids to believe it! It's on their faces, and their attitudes have changed. I can't explain what it feels like to see these kids. Our principal is coming into my room where these kids are participating in PSB. These are problem kids, or they were! And for the first time, he [principal] is coming in for something good...to pat kids on the back for reading with their parents....These were the kids that would stand in line waiting to be dismissed and just thumb through books that were on the table. Now they are taking these books to really read instead of thumbing through them.

These statements indicate that when parents are supportive at home, their children's self-esteem and reading attitudes improve. In addition to these improvements, some parents' self-esteem and reading abilities changed. Deborah Bova, a PSB leader at Creston Junior High School (Indianapolis, Indiana), shared how the PSB program helped improve a parent's reading ability:

It's not just kids that are benefiting from this program. I have a parent in our group who told me that she didn't read very well. I encouraged her to stay in the group because I told her 'the way a person learns to read is by reading.' With her being so honest with me, I could help her. I helped her pick books I thought she could read and that would hold her interest. She came to every meeting, and after one of our meetings she told me 'I just can't get over how I like these [books]. I'm able to read them'....Her daughter said to me, "You know my mom reads more books. She's read more books than she's ever read. I think it's great that she likes to read books that I like to read!"

One way this parent assisted her adolescent in selecting reading material and encouraging her to read was to be a model. As adolescents observe the selection procedures of influential adults, they begin to transfer the techniques to their own book selection.

Parents' and Children's Stories

The second section of case-study reports (Appendix M, N, and O) presents PSB stories from parents and children who participated in the program. Three evident themes emerged from our conversations with these parents and children: 1) PSB helped parents *find* time for the program ; 2) PSB informed parents about adolescents' problems and concerns; and 3) PSB enhanced parent/child relationships and improved family communication.

1) **Finding Time for PSB (see Appendix M):** PSB parents' discussions reflected positive attitudes about parent involvement that motivated these parents to find time for PSB. For instance, Jerry Nugent and his son Nicholas participated in a PSB program. Mr. Nugent

shared his personal beliefs about parent involvement and how that influenced his active participation in PSB:

> *Our [PSB] meetings were scheduled so that more than just mothers could attend. Parents that work have personal days, sick days, or whatever. If you want to go to things, you go to the things that are priorities. Nicholas is my priority. I'm only going to have Nicholas until the summer after 12th grade. After that time he will be off to school or wherever, and he is as good as gone from our home. Surely, for this length of time I can give up something because after the summer of his 12th grade, it's going to be all my time. Eighteen or nineteen years devoted to Nicholas isn't a lot of time out of my life, but it is a lot of valuable time in Nicholas' life.*

Barbara Putrich, a parent, shared the approach she took when trying to find time for book sharing with her daughter Gayle:

> *Parents Sharing Books is like dieting. When you get off your diet, you try again tomorrow to get right back on it. This [PSB] is the same thing. You don't beat yourself up when you miss a night of reading together. You just make up your mind that you'll get back to your routine the next day.... You just decide you're going to do it!*

Barbara's metaphor offers sensible advice to parents who are trying to resolve difficulties with work schedules, homework, extra-curricular activities, and time for meaningful book sharing at home. A mother made this statement about her efforts to read to her children regularly:

> *I know this probably sounds strange, but I wanted to change how I sent my children off to school every morning. I decided that we would read together before they left for school. PSB has helped to send my children off to school with a positive attitude....Before PSB, I found myself yelling and giving orders to the children, like "Get your book bag," or "Tie those shoes," or "What do you mean, you can't find your books?" I rushed them off to school. I would be upset, and I'm sure they felt the same way....I got up earlier so we could have fifteen to twenty minutes before the bus came to read. It [PSB] changed how we started our day and how we interacted with each other. We had positive talks when we started reading together. Now I think my children go off to school thinking that the day is going to be all right, because everything started off positive at home. This has to affect how they do in school and what they think about life in general...Who would think that something this simple could do so much for the attitudes of children and parents? It gives me a great deal of pleasure to know that I can provide my children with this sense of security about home and school.*

The key for many PSB families was regularly making time for family reading, and realizing that changing reading habits takes time. Reading aloud is habit forming; once the habit is formed, it is hard to break. But first, the family must agree on an appropriate time for reading, a time convenient for all family members.

2) **PSB Was a Learning Experience (see Appendix N):** Parents revealed that PSB provided them an opportunity to learn more about their children. Being exposed to children's adolescent books enabled parents to understand some of the situations their children were faced with during adolescence. Becky Jester and her mother reflect a common theme. Becky commented about her mother reading the same books that she was reading:

> *I was surprised when my mom wanted to read books that I like to read. And then I couldn't believe that my mom would really like the books that I like to read! We both picked different types of books so it's been fun to see what Mom picks out.*

Mrs. Jester added:

> *There were lessons in these books. There were lessons about people and friends and real-life situations and circumstances that I appreciated the exposure to; drinking, peer pressure, cliques, and all sorts of things Becky and other kids her age are faced with today.*

Many young adult books deal with the developing adolescent and problems caused by the transition from childhood to adulthood. Parents can read books written for young adults to learn about and better understand their adolescents. Young adult literature has the potential to educate parents and guide teenagers as they strive to meet the needs of social affection and self-esteem, and to help parents as they strive to understand them.

3) **PSB Enhanced Parent/Child Relationships (see Appendix O):** Perhaps the most significant impact of the program was the growth in relationships and increased communication between parents and children who participated in the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Parents emphasized that PSB provided them and their children an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas and to talk about issues and concerns that children are confronted with during the adolescent stages. Geri Bradford and her daughter Leslie decided to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* program because they felt a need to spend time with each other. Leslie was a fifth grader at McCulloch Middle School, and she talked with us about her reasons for wanting to get involved in PSB:

> *I decided to try it [PSB], because I never read with my mom any more. She is busy and we never spend time together. My mom is busy and she didn't spend much time with me or my sister so I thought this might be good for us....Before we did Parents Sharing Books, we probably would have disagreed and that would have been the end of it. We still disagree, but now we share our opinions and try to understand how the other person feels.*

There were a significant number of responses from parents about aspects of parent/child relationships. Parents discussed the parent/child relationships that were enhanced because of PSB. One parent commented:

> *This project increased our ability to communicate in a more meaningful way. This project was especially on time for us. Communication was at an all time*

low, and this project has certainly helped open our line of communication with each other.

Parents' discussions revealed that sharing books with their children gave them an opportunity to see their children grow and observe how their children's thinking was becoming more mature. Moreover, their book-sharing times helped parents and children understand each other's point of view. In Mrs. Bradford's words: "we came to know each other better, and I understand myself a little better."

The benefits that leaders, principals, parents, and children received from participating in PSB resulted from a strong partnership between families and leaders like those represented in the sample statements—partnerships that crossed such obstacles as time, attitudes, practices, and acceptance of responsibility for parent involvement in the school as well as at home.

WHAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW

Although data about family book-sharing experiences were obtained from the project's participants, the sampling procedures available to us had some inherent limitations. First, our respondents were parents and students who volunteered to participate, which might suggest that they were already involved in their children's academic life. Many attended school meetings, and possessed positive reading attitudes. Second, data were not collected from parents or students who attended one or two of the PSB meetings and then dropped out. Those people who dropped out early were not accessible for a variety of reasons. If we had been able to interview these people, we might have obtained other insights about the types of people who benefit from a program like PSB.

We relied on the self-reports of participants with respect to what they did in the parent meetings and in the home. There were no controlled observations of parents and children sharing books. There were no measures of the number of the different strategies parents and students used when sharing books. We do not know exactly which sharing strategies parents and children actually used. All of the parents interviewed indicated that they used "book-talks" to discuss books with their children; only four parents said they tried other book-sharing strategies such as journals; and none of the parents and children interviewed reported that they used sketches when sharing books. The measures of the amount of time students and parents shared in this study were the gross estimates of students and parents. Therefore, we cannot state links between strategies actually used and the time spent reading and discussing books.

It was not the purpose of the *Parents Sharing Books* program or the intent of this evaluation to determine whether students' academic achievement was affected as a result of participating in PSB. However, leaders were asked for their perceptions about the academic benefits afforded those students whose parents participated in the PSB project. Leaders could only provide anecdotal evidence. Gloria Strott shared this story about the students who participated in her PSB program:

> *These [PSB] parents have never been called to school for good news. They have always been at school because something wasn't going right for their children. This [PSB] brought them to school with their children for a positive reason. This program has positively affected both the parents and the image these children have of themselves at school. Other kids are envious of them because they [PSB kids} are the only ones who can use these sets of books. They are finally special. And it is this shared reading program that makes them special. They keep coming back for more books....These kids are the kids who hated to read! They volunteered on their own and then went to their parents. We didn't ask the parents to do this. These kids asked their parents to do this with them! Here is an instance where second or third class readers feel like and want to be first class readers!*

Parents, too, commented about their children's academic achievement. One mother made this statement about her son's progress:

I was very concerned about my son's comprehension. He can read, but has a difficult time recalling what he has read and his grades showed this. I was concerned and sent several letters to his teacher, but [I] got no response. I called the school and the secretary told me about this [PSB] program. We [mother and son] decided to try it and it has helped. It's made me see how I can help him with his problem and help him to know what to do when he doesn't get the meaning of what he reads. This program has helped me, and my son's grades have improved. It's too bad more parents don't take advantage of programs like this one."

Another parent shared this comment about her son's reading attitude:

My son didn't want to do this [PSB], and I was really concerned that he wasn't reading. I kept waiting for things to change. Things didn't change until he and I participated in Parents Sharing Books. I finally just told him we were going to do this! I started reading to him. Now this [PSB] is time we really enjoy spending together....I have to tell him, "We'll read tomorrow. It's time for bed!" Before PSB, I never heard him say, "Can we read just one more chapter, please?" It's been great hearing him ask me to read more! And it's easy to keep this [PSB] going with his enthusiasm.

Once a family read-aloud tradition is begun, it is easy to continue. Since the initial experience was enjoyable, it is natural to suggest that it continue on a regular basis. Books read aloud can inspire reluctant readers and parent/adolescent discussions, can influence attitudes about school and home, and can help children obtain meaning from what they read. Talking about incidents, characters, problems, and relationships in books can be a natural way to begin a discussion about important, difficult to discuss issues. Sharing books can provide children with strategies that can help them obtain more meaning from what they read.

Forty-three percent of the Lilly-targeted schools chose not to take advantage of the PSB project. A sample of non-participating schools were contacted, and were asked about their reasons for not participating in PSB. Their principals commented:

1) *The opportunities to participate in these Lilly projects are wonderful, but we can't do all of them. We just can't find the time or the resources for taking on more.*

2) *It's difficult to find any teachers willing to take on more responsibilities that require their own personal time.*

3) *We have had some teachers go out of their way to get parents involved in our school activities, but it's difficult getting parents involved. Parents just aren't interested in getting involved with the school.*

4) *We have participated in other Lilly programs, and we have had parents and teachers react strongly to the books that are being used in these reading projects. Some parents accuse the teachers of trying to influence their children in negative ways by exposing them to different types of books and ideas. This situation makes it difficult to get other*

projects started, and teachers are apprehensive about offering programs when parents react like this.

5) *We can get some parents here for athletic activities, but it is hard to get them here for other types of programs. They don't support educational programs like they should.*

We hoped for a greater number of schools to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project, but many Lilly-targeted schools seem overwhelmed by the idea of adding more responsibility to the already demanding schedules of teachers. Some teachers hold strong and sometimes negative views about the attitudes of parents toward schooling and the school. Typical contacts between teachers and parents do not help teachers learn about parents' real attitudes toward schooling, even though they believe parent involvement is so important. Under these circumstances, as important as teachers believe the "involvement" of parents to be, their desire for it is understandably ambiguous.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Parents Sharing Books* project, run by the Family Literacy Center and funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., was developed, implemented, and evaluated across three academic years. The purposes of the project focused on increased family reading and family communication. It used a school base for its leadership and for continuing evaluation contacts. In that sense, the *Parents Sharing Books* (PSB) project was a school-promoted parent involvement project.

The Lilly Endowment funds were applied to schools in Indiana that had a high percentage of free lunch participants; thus the program targeted populations that have limited resources in the home for purchasing books and other commercial reading materials. Approximately 60% of the eligible schools participated in the PSB project. Of the nearly 40% who did not participate, the principals gave various reasons for ignoring this free service. Finding time and teacher-leader volunteers were the most frequently mentioned reasons for not participating.

Among the schools that decided to participate in the PSB project, some ran the program all three academic years, some participated during one year only. Most of the local PSB groups reported significant benefits to families and to schools, but it is clear that these school-dominated programs need school leadership to keep them moving.

The results of the *Parents Sharing Books* project were gathered from regular reports, surveys, interviews, and written anecdotes collected over the course of the project.

1. There is an increase in reading and in family communication. Parents indicated that *daily* and *weekly* discussions of books and personal concerns positively changed after participating in PSB, and students also indicated these same positive changes. More parents discussed books with their children on a *daily* (31%) and *weekly* (64%) basis, and parents positively changed their *daily* discussions with their children about personal concerns after participating in PSB. Students' responses also indicated these same positive changes after participating in PSB. More students discussed books with their parents on a *daily* (36%) and *weekly* (52%) basis.

2. Some parents and children like to read and saw this as a way of promoting more reading among family members. Approximately 50% of the parents and 75% of the students indicated that PSB was an opportunity to share and spend time with each other. Students (42%) indicated that PSB increased their desire to read alone, and 48% of the students indicated that PSB increased their appreciation of reading. Parents commented about the increase in family reading after participating in PSB. Parents and students indicated that PSB motivated them to set time aside for reading together. Parents indicated that PSB motivated them to set aside time to read books with their children and talk about personal concerns.

3. Some parents and children saw the improvement of their interpersonal communications as the primary benefit of their participation in the program. Nearly 70% of the students indicated that PSB improved communication with their parents. Parents and students felt that PSB provided an additional opportunity for families to talk over things, share family thoughts and ideas, and spend time together. Parents indicated that PSB helped them to bring up difficult subjects with their children, and paved the way for thoughtful and positive parent/child talks. Students indicated that communication with their parents (67%), and their desire to read and talk with their parents (54%) improved during participation in PSB. Students also indicated that PSB helped them to see their parents in a different light. They were impressed that their parents would take the time to read young adult books and share these books with them. Students indicated that "spending quality time" with their parents was a significant outcome of PSB.

4. Home-school partnerships need regular support in order to succeed. Over 90% of the PSB leaders who implemented a PSB program felt positive about the program. They appreciated the FLC staff's efforts to inform them about positive approaches for promoting book-sharing at home, and felt the program increased parents' interest in sharing positive reading experiences with their children. Parents and leaders indicated that parent meetings provided encouragement and support for participating in PSB. Parents commented that listening to other parents share their thoughts and ideas was a valuable component of the PSB parent meetings. Parents indicated that parent and teacher/leader relationships were strengthened as a result of the PSB parent meetings. Teachers will continue to need information, activities/strategies, leader training, and a clear signal from the school administration that parent involvement is a priority.

5. Parents will make reading and sharing of books a priority when they are shown meaningful approaches for accomplishing those ends. Almost 92% of the parents and approximately 89% of the students felt that they benefitted from the PSB program. Parents indicated that leader suggestions helped them to set time aside for reading, informed them about adolescents' reading interests, and provided meaningful approaches for sharing books with their children. Many parents commented that PSB was easy to do once they knew how to share with their children. Parents became aware of their children's reading interests, and they became familiar with young adult books. Parents and students indicated that PSB was something they looked forward to continuing, but found the support that PSB meetings offered was a significant factor in helping them to maintain their sharing habits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Home and school links need to be fostered by the school through training and through follow-up reminders and support. Teachers, administrators, and parent coordinators need additional information on how to improve home-school relations and increase parent participation. In many instances, the efforts of our staff focused on ways to change existing attitudes about home-school interaction and provide instruction to experienced teachers. This approach is still necessary, but education and continuing in-service programs must provide all teachers with

    a. more information and specific instructions on how to interact with parents and the community.
    b. designs or models for promoting home-school relations.
    c. training to recognize community concerns and cultural practices that will inform curriculum development for parent involvement.
    d. knowledge about parent perspectives and approaches that can enhance family literacy, family communication, and home-school relations.

2. Teacher leaders need incentives to carry on parent involvement activities. These activities are not part of the teacher's normal assignment. Teachers need rewards for extra efforts, such as: a) extra pay; b) college credit; and c) professional development credit. Schools will need to offer extra pay to those teachers/leaders who conduct parent programs just as other teachers are given stipends for conducting other extra-curricular activities in the schools. Providing opportunities to receive college or professional development credit will encourage teachers to learn more about parent interactions, and to implement successful programs that can benefit families, classrooms and schools.

3. Parent participation in PSB needs to be tied to family benefits as well as to better school achievement. By emphasizing communication between parent and children, and by showing parents regularly how to find time for these activities, we increase the possibility for success. Parents will need more information and specific strategies on how to interact with their children when sharing books or other literacy-related activities that can impact the quality of family life. Parents will need the support of teachers and other parents to continue their efforts to provide enriching family experiences.

4. Students in grades 1-8 will openly support PSB when they see the possibility for better family communication and/or they see the pleasure of social interaction through group meetings with other parents and children. Students need to have an interactive role in improving school and home partnerships. This interactive role will involve an additional design for parent involvement. Students will need to understand the importance of their parents' involvement. Students will need to be aware of ways they can involve their parents in school activities and share the responsibility for involving their parents in PSB. Activities and modeling techniques can assist students to show, explain, and discuss books with parents. Students could be asked to respond to their ideas about parent involvement and the information they need to interact with their parents about books or other school work. Parents could be asked to listen to what the students have written; or discuss ideas that are student generated; or discuss ideas that are

important to the student or the family. With greater student/parent participation in structuring programs, social interactions between teachers, students, and parents can be strengthened.

5. The power of self-help groups needs to be explored more fully in the context of promoting family literacy and family communication. Broadening the responsibility for and interest in "parent participation" beyond the school to a "community" effort—local church groups, family agencies, professionals, businesses, and other social organizations—will offer families multiple opportunities for increasing family literacy, communication, and interaction. Neighborhood groups and agencies who recognize the importance of parent involvement can offer additional support for parents who wish to enhance family relationships.

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APPENDIX A: PSB Sites

ALLEN COUNTY	
Jefferson Middle School	Fort Wayne
Lakeside Middle School	Fort Wayne
Lane Middle School	Fort Wayne
Memorial Park Middle School	Fort Wayne
Miami Middle School	Fort Wayne
Northwood Middle School	Fort Wayne
Portage Middle School	Fort Wayne
Leo Jr.-Sr. High School	Leo
CLARK COUNTY	
New Washington High School	New Washington
Parkview Middle School	Jeffersonville
Charleston Middle School	Charleston
CRAWFORD COUNTY	
Crawford Co. Jr.-Sr. High School	Marengo
DELAWARE COUNTY	
Northside Middle School	Muncie
Wilson Middle School	Muncie
ELKHART COUNTY	
North Side Middle School	Elkhart
West Side Middle School	Elkhart
Pierre Moran Middle School	Elkhart
FLOYD COUNTY	
Nathaniel Scribner Jr. High School	New Albany
GRANT COUNTY	
Jones Middle School	Marion
Justice Middle School	Marion
McCulloch Middle School	Marion
HENRY COUNTY	
Parkview Jr. High School	New Castle
Parkview Jr. High B-7 Bldg.	New Castle
HOWARD COUNTY	
Sycamore Elem. and Middle School	Kokomo
JEFFERSON COUNTY	
Madison Jr. High School	Madison

JOHNSON COUNTY	
Edinburgh Community High School	Edinburgh
KNOX COUNTY	
North Knox East Elem. and Jr. High	Edwardsport
LAKE COUNTY	
River Forest Jr. High School	Hobart
Lake Ridge Middle School	Gary
West Side Jr. High School	East Chicago
Thomas Edison School	Gary
Tolleston Middle School	Gary
Bailly Middle School	Gary
Bechman Middle School	Gary
Kennedy-King Middle School	Gary
Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School	Gary
Emerson School	Gary
Scott Middle School	Hammond
Spohn Elem/Middle School	Hammond
LAPORTE COUNTY	
Barker Jr. High School	Michigan City
Kesling Middle School	LaPorte
MADISON COUNTY	
North Side Middle School	Anderson
MARION COUNTY	
Keystone Middle School	Indianapolis
Meridian Middle	Indianapolis
Creston Jr. High School	Indianapolis
Stonybrook Jr. High School	Indianapolis
Fulton Jr. High School	Indianapolis
South Wayne Jr. High School	Indianapolis
Crispus Attucks Jr. High School	Indianapolis
John Marshall Jr. High School	Indianapolis
Forest Manor School	Indianapolis
Henry W. Longfellow School 28	Indianapolis
Emma Donnan School 72	Indianapolis
H.L. Harshman School 101	Indianapolis
Willard J. Gambold School 108	Indianapolis
MARTIN COUNTY	
Shoals Community Jr.-Sr. High School	Shoals
MONROE COUNTY	
Tri-North Middle School	Bloomington
Lora L. Batchelor Middle School	Bloomington

OWEN COUNTY	
Owen Valley Middle School	Spencer
PARKE COUNTY	
Rockville Jr.-Sr. High School	Rockville
PORTER COUNTY	
Willowcreek Middle School	Portage
RANDOLPH COUNTY	
Union Jr.-Sr. High School	Modoc
Randolph Southern Jr.-Sr. High School	Lynn
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY	
Pierre Navarre Middle School	South Bend
STARKE COUNTY	
Knox Community Jr. High	Knox
SULLIVAN COUNTY	
Union High School	Dugger
Hymera Elementary School	Hymera
TIPPECANOE COUNTY	
Sunnyside Middle School	Lafayette
VANDERBURGH COUNTY	
Evans Middle School	Evansville
Glenwood Middle School	Evansville
Helfrich Park Middle School	Evansville
Thompkins Middle School	Evansville
McGary Middle School	Evansville
Oak Hill Middle School	Evansville
Washington Middle School	Evansville
VERMILLION COUNTY	
South Vermillion Middle School	Clinton
VIGO COUNTY	
University Middle School	Terre Haute
Chauncey Rose Jr. High School	Terre Haute
Otter Creek Jr. High School	Terre Haute
Sarah Scott Jr. High School	Terre Haute
WAYNE COUNTY	
Hibberd School	Richmond

APPENDIX B: Parent Pre-Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

School_____

1. What are your reasons for attending the *Parents Sharing Books* training?

2. Do you ever read to one another at home? _____No _____Yes

3. Do you have a set time for reading at home? _____No _____Yes
   If so, when and how long?

4. Do you like to read? _____No _____Yes

5. Do you presently discuss any of these with your child?
   Circle how often.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	D	W	M	R	N	NC
School Work	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Books	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Magazines	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Personal Concerns	D	W	M	R	N	NC

6. How often does your family use a library? (circle one)

   Daily Weekly Monthly Rarely Never

7. How do you rate your daily communications with your child? (circle one)

   Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

APPENDIX C: Parent Post-Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

School_____

1. Do you ever read to one another at home? _____No _____Yes

2. Do you have a set time for reading at home? _____No _____Yes
   If so, when and how long?

3. Do you presently discuss any of these with your child?
   Circle how often.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	D	W	M	R	N	NC
School Work	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Books	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Magazines	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Personal Concerns	D	W	M	R	N	NC

4. How often does your family use a library? (circle one)

   Daily Weekly Monthly Rarely Never

5. What were the favorite books you and your child read from the *Parents Sharing Books* collection? Why?

6. What were the least favorite books you and your child read from the *Parents Sharing Books* collection? Why?

7. What books have you read that you and your child would like to see added to the *Parents Sharing Books* collection?

8. Do you feel you and your child benefited from participating in the Parents Sharing Books project? _____No _____Yes

   Please explain:

Comments:

APPENDIX D: Student Pre-Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

School_____

1. What are your reasons for participating in *Parents Sharing Books*?

2. Do you like to read? _____No _____Yes

3. Do you presently discuss any of these with your parent(s)?
   Circle how often.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	D	W	M	R	N	NC
School Work	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Books	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Magazines	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Personal Concerns	D	W	M	R	N	NC

4. How do you rate your daily communications with your parent(s)? (circle one)

   Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

5. Why do you read? (check as many as appropriate).

   _____For information

   _____To complete school assignments

   _____For pleasure

APPENDIX E: Student Post-Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

School_____

1. Do you like to read? _____No _____Yes

2. Do you presently discuss any of these with your parent(s)?
   Circle how often.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	No Comment
News	D	W	M	R	N	NC
School Work	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Books	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Magazines	D	W	M	R	N	NC
Personal Concerns	D	W	M	R	N	NC

3. How do you rate your daily communications with your parent(s)? (circle one)

   Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

4. Do you think the PSB program has done any of the following? (check all that apply)

   _____Improved communication with my parents

   _____Increased my desire to read alone

   _____Increased my appreciation of reading

   _____Not affected me at all

5. What were the favorite books you and your parent(s) read from the *Parents Sharing Books* collection? Why?

6. What were the least favorite books you and your parent(s) read from the *Parents Sharing Books* collection? Why?

7. What books have you read that you and your parent(s) would like to see added to the *Parents Sharing Books* collection?

8. Do you feel you and your parent(s) benefited from participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* project? _____Yes _____No Please explain:

Comments:

APPENDIX F: IU Informed Consent Statement

INVESTIGATORS

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

INFORMATION

You are invited to participate in an evaluation of the *Parents Sharing Books Project*. This study will take place_____. This form outlines the purposes of this study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a respondent.

The purpose of these case studies are to understand:

1. the experiences of parents and middle school children who participated in successful *Parents Sharing Books* programs.

2. the techniques used by leader teams who implemented a *Parents Sharing Books* program.

3. the reactions of teachers and parents about this type of parent involvement.

The methods to be used to collect data for this study are explained below. From these data sources, we will write a case study report about you.

Initial contact will be made to acquaint researchers and subjects to the purpose of the interviews. Interviews, along with the use of audio tapes, and perhaps video tapes, and photographs that may be used for PSB publications, will be conducted with the parents, students, and/or leader teams. Interviews will take approximately 40-60 minutes for each respondent, and these interviews will take place in the school library or other convenient places within the school. A case report will be written and shared with you. Data collected from your case study will be compiled into a report that will be submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc. and used in other publications. You may request that your real name and identity not be revealed in these reports.

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time about the nature of the study and our methods. Your suggestions and concerns are important to us. Our phone numbers and addresses are provided at the top of the consent form.

The following are the terms of participating in the case study:

1. Your real name will be used during data collection and in the written case report only if you wish. If you wish that your real name not be used during the data collection or in the written case report, at the start of the study, you, and any place names will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all reports.

2. If you give permission to be recorded, audio tapes, video tapes, and photographs will be used in publications and instructional materials for the *Parents Sharing Books* project. You will have access to and be allowed to preview the recordings.

3. You will receive a copy of the case report before the final draft is written and negotiate changes with the researcher.

4. You will receive a copy of the final case report soon after completion. This final case report will be used in future publications of the Family Literacy Center to disseminate information about the *Parents Sharing Books* Project.

5. Your participation in this study will help to highlight the organization, results, and benefits of this parent involvement program to the funding agency, Lilly Endowment, Inc.

6. The information collected through this interview is the property of the Family Literacy Center. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of your taped interview, a tape can be made available to you. You should contact the Family Literacy Center if you are interested.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored at the Family Literacy Center, Indiana University, and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.

COMPENSATION

For participating in this study you will receive trade books for your enjoyment at home or you may wish to contribute these books to your school's PSB Bookshelf. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, this benefit will no longer be available to you.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher(s) listed at the top of this consent form.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason and without any prejudice. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion your data will be returned to you upon request or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

I (do/do not) grant permission to be quoted directly in the case report.

I (do/do not) grant permission to have the interviews audio taped. The respondent has the right to preview these materials upon request.

I (do/do not) grant permission to have artifacts such as book-sharing journals, sketches, and other PSB related materials copied and used in a case study report.

I (do/do not) grant permission to have my real name used in case study records and case study reports.

Participant's signature_____ **Date**_____

Investigator's signature_____ **Date**_____

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION

I (do/do not) grant permission for my child to be interviewed and quoted directly in the case report.

I (do/do not) grant permission to have my child's interviews audio taped. The child respondent has the right to preview these materials upon request.

I (do/do not) grant permission to have my child's real name used in case study records and case study reports.

Parent's signature_____ **Date** ____

Student's signature_____ **Date** ____

Investigator's signature_____ **Date** ____

APPENDIX G: Letter to PSB Leader(s)

(letter appeared on FLC letterhead)

January 17, 1992

Dear

We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to become a participant in the final evaluation of the *Parents Sharing Books* project. You have been selected as a site for this case study report because of your participation in *Parents Sharing Books* which is funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc. and developed by the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University.

Enclosed you will find a copy of a sample form outlining the requests and responsibilities of this study. Please read through this thoroughly so that you have an idea of what the study will involve. We would like to contact you next week to get your response and to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Because we are asking you to participate in this final evaluation study and assuming you join us in telling the story of PSB's success, we would like for you to recommend a parent and child or family involved in your PSB group that would be helpful in providing additional information about the program. It is possible that you might already have a parent in mind that you could ask to participate in the study. You might ask if they would be interested in talking to us about their experience with PSB. When we receive your recommendations, we would contact them formally and arrange a date when we could meet together to discuss the study and get necessary consents for carrying out the study.

We hope that you join us in this study, and once again, appreciate your commitment in helping to extend the influence of *Parents Sharing Books*.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R Simic
Program Evaluator

Enc.

APPENDIX H: Letter PSB Participants

(letter appeared on FLC letterhead)

February 10, 1992

Dear

We appreciate your willingness to participate in the final evaluation of the *Parents Sharing Books* project. Your school has been selected as a site for this case study report because of its participation in *Parents Sharing Books* which is funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and developed by the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University.

Enclosed you will find a copy of a sample form outlining the requests and responsibilities of this study. Please read through this thoroughly so that you have an idea of what the study will involve. Your PSB leader(s) will contact the Family Literacy Center when both of you have arranged a date and time that is convenient to meet and talk with us about PSB. If you have questions prior to our meeting, feel free to contact your school's PSB leader(s) or the Family Literacy Center.

Once again, we appreciate your commitment in participating in your school's *Parents Sharing Books* program and look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R. Simic
Program Evaluator

Enc.

APPENDIX I:
Request to Print Participants' Stories

(letter appeared on FLC letterhead)

May 3, 1993

Dear

Below is a request for permission to print your interview with the PSB staff. Please check the statement that applies and return to the Family Literacy Center as soon as possible. Thank you.

_____I have read over the story that was written from the interview I had with the PSB staff. I made NO changes in the story, and I am satisfied with how it will appear in the report to Lilly.

_____I have read over the story that was written from the interview I had with the PSB staff. I have made changes in the story, and I have made recommendations on the copy I am returning to the Family Literacy Center. (Please return only the pages on which you have made comments or corrections.)

Please feel free to contact us at the Family Literacy Center if you have questions about your story. Please sign below and return. Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Parent(s): _____

Child: _____

Leader(s): _____

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us with this evaluation of the *Parents Sharing Books* program.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R. Simic
Program Evaluator

Enc.

PSB Leader and Principal Stories

In this first section of PSB stories, leaders and principals talk about their impressions of the *Parents Sharing Books* program. These PSB participants point out that implementing their PSB program required many hours beyond the normal school day, and not all of their efforts paid off. Some schools were successful in recruiting and training several groups of parents; others didn't share that same success.

As we read their stories, we notice both similarities and differences in their approaches to implementing PSB. One thing is evident in many of their stories—home-school relations were at risk for some of these targeted schools. The need to improve home-school relations motivated many of these people to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* project.

Many of these PSB leaders recognize parents as valuable partners in educating children, and they seek meaningful and effective parent interactions that will encourage parents and children to read at home and to become involved with their children's school experience. In most instances, these leaders are aware that both schools and parents need assistance if they are to work in innovative ways as equal partners. Leaders and principals talk about the approaches they use for recruiting parents, their frustrations in implementing their PSB program, the support they need to continue reaching out to more parents, and the benefits they receive from being a part of the *Parents Sharing Books* project.

APPENDIX J: Teamwork and Support

In the stories that follow, 'teamwork' and 'support' are major themes that readers should notice as PSB leaders talk about their experiences with implementing the *Parents Sharing Books* program. 'Teamwork' and 'gathering support' are themes that emerge when PSB leaders talk about how they seek the support of their school principal. They say that support from principals, parents, and other PSB leaders provides incentive and motivation for continuing to work with parents and the *Parents Sharing Books* program.

Notice how leaders of these successful PSB groups use multiple resources for recruiting parents; they also set realistic expectations for parent participation. These leaders utilize the parent coordinators of their PSB team to contact parents about upcoming meetings, they inform parents about what the meetings are about, and they hold their meetings at times that are most convenient for parents in the community. Their stories emphasize the importance of advertising their *Parents Sharing Books* program. Many of these leaders use local media, such as the radio station and newspapers to announce and publicize *Parents Sharing Books* meetings. They also generate interest in their program by keeping other teachers and administrators informed.

OWEN VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: I have had the pleasure of working with Darla Staley during the implementation of her PSB program. Our staff has been able to make frequent site visits to this program, because of the close proximity of Darla's school to the Family Literacy Center. Darla has utilized the support of our staff by including us in parent meetings and extending invitations to participate in their PSB celebrations. Darla, the other PSB leader Charlotte, PSB parents, and the principal of the Owen Valley Middle School assisted our staff when we produced the PSB video.

Another reason why it has been so easy to sustain this contact with Darla is because of the enthusiasm and determination that radiates from her. It's been fun just being around Darla and her PSB co-leader Charlotte, and seeing the way in which they have taken the PSB program and made it into one of the most successful programs among the targeted middle schools. They have taken the PSB program and tailored it to meet the needs of Owen Valley Middle School parents. Darla confesses that it wasn't instant success.

In the past, parent involvement has never been a priority at OVMS, but Darla and Charlotte rally the support of the school's principal. They set up displays at open houses to attract parents to their group. Darla looks back on this experience with honesty and frankness about the OVMS program. "I was disappointed with the numbers when I first did this program, and I knew that I could do a better job." Her first attempt at recruiting parents through the local newspaper didn't work out that well. Darla and her PSB parent leader responded to this setback by contacting parents personally and talking to them about the program. Once the program began to take off, they encouraged these PSB participants to bring other parents to their meetings. They attended several PSB seminars to obtain additional information about recruiting parents and to gather ideas that would increase the effectiveness of their program.

Darla saw additional opportunities to improve parent involvement and family reading at OVMS by getting involved in another Lilly project called the *Book Shop*. Darla integrates PSB with the school's *Book Shop* to encourage book sharing at home. After PSB meetings, parents are encouraged to browse the *Book Shop* and make book choices from selected booklists provided at PSB meetings.

Darla is attentive to the importance of recognizing parents for their interest in and commitment to the *Parents Sharing Books* program in their school. Darla and Charlotte plan special family dinners at the end of school to celebrate the success of PSB participants. In addition, parents and children receive certificates, posters, bumper stickers, and other incentives during the school's spring awards night. Darla sees this not only as an opportunity to praise parents and children for their book sharing efforts, but as an opportunity to encourage other parents to become active participants of the PSB program.

Darla is quick to give others credit for the success of this program. "I couldn't have asked for a better parent leader. Charlotte has been great about working with these parents and recruiting more parents. She is so enthusiastic and she can really handle anything you ask her to do. Our principal, Jan, has been super. We have gotten fantastic support from her, and she has been terrific about supporting anything we have wanted to do or try with our *Parents Sharing Books* program."

The information about the *Parents Sharing Books* project came across the desk of Owen Valley's Middle School principal, Jan Rowland. It is our opinion that Dr. Rowland passed this information on to the right person!

Darla: Several years ago I was at a conference and heard this middle school librarian give a presentation about a program she had started with parents. Parents would meet in the library and discuss topics that were perhaps problems that their kids were having during these adolescent years. This librarian had books available to parents that were books about characters who might be experiencing the same problems they were facing with their teen. These parents would get together and talk about the books and act as a support group for each other in order to help them understand the problems of the adolescent years.

After hearing this librarian speak, I always thought it would be great to get parents together and have them read books with their child so that they could discuss and talk about some of the same problems that adolescents are facing. These discussions could help parents understand their children, and students could maybe understand their parents' points of view. I thought this kind of interaction could help parents and children cope with the problems that families face today.

A few years later, our school went through a middle grades evaluation. One of the things that came out of this evaluation was that we [Owen Valley Middle School] needed more parent involvement. At the time we didn't have any type of parent involvement—nothing. Parent involvement hasn't been promoted at Owen Valley in the past, but I believe and I think others will agree that our PSB program is a positive move toward increasing parent involvement.

It was a combination of these experiences and situations that really pushed me into the present position I am in. No one at our building has ever made a commitment to improving our school's parent involvement; parent involvement materials or initiative for promoting parent involvement has never surfaced. We [school personnel] all agree that parent involvement is important, but that's as far as it ever goes.

When the notice to participate in PSB came through the mail, my principal forwarded it to me. I think it reached me because the brochure calls the program to the attention of reading teachers, Chapter 1 people, and so on. I was thrilled when I read the description of the *Parents Sharing Books* program. It seemed to tie everything together so well; promoting reading for junior high students and involving parents in the process. It was perfect timing for Owen Valley Middle School. Getting involved in this program [PSB] has been a major step toward a positive parent involvement program in our school.

The *Parents Sharing Books* program is the first attempt our school has made to involve parents with the school. I'm not placing the blame anywhere. I'm just saying that we recognize that we should involve parents, but [talking about it] is as far as it goes. We don't have a parent volunteer program, but parents do help out at athletic events.

I think parents need to feel comfortable with the teacher who is organizing a program like this. A PSB leader, or any teacher for that matter, needs to make parents feel that they are a necessary part of their kids' education and that we really need them.

I can't imagine not taking advantage of something like this. It hasn't cost our school a dime. Charlotte [PSB parent leader] and I have invested time. I'll admit it has taken a lot of time to get this program going, but I feel that I knew this up front when my principal confronted me about the PSB program. I didn't expect it to run itself; I knew it would take time. Charlotte and I were willing to do this, and Charlotte has been tremendous as a parent leader and very instrumental in recruiting parents.

You always wish you could spend more time on something like this, but that's not always possible. You learn to use the time you do have and make the most of it. I find the manual very helpful when organizing for my meetings. Everything you need is right here, but there is still time involved in getting ready. Charlotte and I invest time in contacting parents either through letters, postcards, or telephoning. It takes time to run things off for meetings and all the things involved in holding a meeting. But as far as having to develop anything or create any materials, it's all right in the manual. I occasionally provide additional articles, bibliographies, and other things I think parents might appreciate. I think parents like to take things home to refer to later.

Our group has PSB booklets that I organized from the PSB materials. Each parent in our group has a mini version of the PSB manual. Many of them bring them back to each meeting and add materials from each meeting. I figure materials like this can find a permanent place in the home if they are collected in folders or booklets that can be referred to later by parents.

I think what I appreciate most from your staff is that each time I go through your training seminars and receive new materials, I feel like I get something out of it. With each revision of your manual, I feel like you really use our [PSB leaders'] suggestions for improving the program and its materials. You value our input. That's encouraging and motivating as a leader to see that kind of response and support.

We hold PSB meetings approximately every six to nine weeks. Charlotte and I tried holding monthly meetings, but we just couldn't do it. This schedule for meetings goes along with our grading period and parents really feel that meeting every six to nine weeks works best for them.

The first year we did PSB, we started two groups. We had a group that first semester, and then we started another group second semester. I felt it was beneficial to start that second group, because I wanted more parent members. I was disappointed in the numbers we had for the first group so getting a second group started helped increase the size of our group. We just put the two groups together; some parents from the first group continued with the program. Merging the two groups worked well, and I think I have improved as a leader with each group that has been started.

We used the media to recruit parents at the beginning. We ran an ad in the newspaper for months and months and months. Unfortunately in our community we still have a lot of people who don't take the newspaper. We don't have a radio station, so it turned out that our initial ideas about getting parents involved didn't turn out to be the most effective.

It was actually talking directly to parents and spreading the word to other teachers that recruited most of our parents. I talked to many of the teachers at our middle school. I received recommendations from teachers about parents they thought would be interested and would actually

be good participants. Charlotte and I telephoned these parents, told them a little bit about the program, and encouraged them to come to the first meeting.

We have an orientation for parents who have children coming into the middle school next year. I always arrange a brochure for this orientation so that parents can become familiar with the program. I emphasize the communication benefits the program offers rather than push it as a reading program. I think this approach has more appeal for parents and children at this age.

Our group increases [in size] each time we start a new PSB group, because parents who are already in the group talk to other parents about the program. Parents have a PSB display at our Open House in the fall. I have parents work in shifts [at the display] so that one parent doesn't have to carry the responsibility. I think having parents talk to other parents about their experience is a positive way to reach parents and families.

We have the manual, books, brochures, and pictures from our parent gatherings to show parents at this display, and it is located right by the front door. We have a handout that we pass out to parents as they walk by, and we encourage them to sign-up. We ask for their phone numbers so that we can contact these parents and let them know about the first meeting.

We have a very positive group. Many in our group indicate that they really want this program to continue, and they want to increase the size of our group. Parents in our group have done a great job of recruiting other parents. Our group this year has grown to 30 participants! That's a significant increase from when we first started PSB a year ago.

We don't always have all 30 parents present at our meetings; usually have around 15. Some parents whom we consider part of our group have not been able to attend a meeting at all because of work conflicts, but they are reading and sharing with their children. Parents who attend the meetings keep them informed, and we let them know when the next meeting is coming up. Their children are constantly in and out selecting more books. These children tell me that they are sharing with their parents and sometimes share what their parents think about a particular book.

Another thing that I think strengthens our group is integrating our PSB program with our Book Shop program. I really wanted to hold our meetings in our Book Shop, but the room just isn't big enough. What we do is have our PSB meeting in the library and then let parents and students go to the Book Shop after our meeting. They can select books either from the PSB Bookshelf or make choices from the Book Shop racks. I see them using the booklists from the PSB program when making their selections. These two programs have gone together so well.

It's great to see the students get excited about these programs. I have to admit that, when I first went to the PSB seminar, I wondered what kids this age would think about sitting down and reading a book with their mom or dad. I haven't heard one negative thing from kids that talk about the program. The kids who are involved with PSB like it. Their comments indicate that they seem to get a real good insight into Mom's and Dad's feelings about things that they probably wouldn't have otherwise talked about. They think it's really great that Mom and Dad are sitting down and reading; reading with them! Some make comments about the individual time they get with their parents. Students still need their parents' time at this age, and kids see this as a very positive opportunity. One student commented that she was really impressed that her parent

took the time to share with her. This child knew that Mom and Dad were very busy, and yet they would find the time to sit down and read or talk about a book with her. That made the child feel extra important.

I know kids are talking about this program, because I have students who aren't in my class come and ask me about PSB. I have sixth graders get involved in this program because other kids have told them about the special books and the meetings for parents and children. I have kids checking out books whose parents can't come to meetings, but they tell me "we're sharing together," and this is fine with me. I'd love for them to come to meetings, but you have to be realistic. Some just can't or won't come, but I can continue to promote reading at home in situations like this by encouraging that particular child when she comes in to check-out another book. A simple, but sincere query like, "How's it going?", can make all the difference to children.

I wish there was something we could do to improve the efforts that the kids put into completing their surveys. Our parents did an excellent job of responding to their surveys and making sincere comments about the program. I find this feedback very beneficial to me in structuring future meetings. Students typically just don't want to take the time to 'write' comments. They are good about marking choices, but just don't put any thought into the comment section. I know one parent was real disappointed with her daughter when she saw her survey. The mother even said, "Becky, is that all you wrote!" I think this is very typical of kids this age. Now if I told them I was going to give them a grade for the quality of their comments, then we might get somewhere! Kids this age are more likely to tell you about some thing they don't like!

Another thing I'd be interested in having is the opportunity to make book selections for my PSB Bookshelf. This is a conservative rural community and some of the books on the PSB Bookshelf were never checked out. I encourage students and parents to read a diversity of books to broaden their own world they live in and enrich their multi-cultural perspectives, but I think it takes time to allow this to happen. As a teacher in the community, I think I have insight about the kind of books that would interest parents. Once I motivate parents and children to read, then I can make the transition into broadening these interests by increasing the type of multi-cultural books available.

There are teachers in this building who have no idea that I'm doing PSB in our school. There are others who think it's ridiculous, and those teachers weren't real happy with me when I took so much time to recognize PSB parents at our spring awards night! I called all the parents up and I gave them a certificate and a bumper sticker that reads "Have you read to your child today?" I called the kids up and they received a Garfield poster that reads, "I hate to read alone." This took time to recognize these parents and students, but I feel recognition for this accomplishment is just as worthy as any of the other things we recognize students for during the year. It was discouraging to hear your own colleagues complain about the time that was taken to do this.

Anything worth doing takes time, and I want other parents in the audience to hear about the accomplishments that parents and kids have made. I want them to know about the activities we have been fortunate enough to participate in such as the PSB program, talking with other leaders about our PSB program, and making the PSB video. I see this as advertisement for next year. It's good that I get my energy from hearing the benefits parents and kids are getting from this

program. Charlotte would probably tell you that she gets her energy from me! There is some truth in this. When you are around people who are enthusiastic and enjoy what they do, it is contagious. As long as I have parents and students who are getting something out of PSB, then this is my payback.

Jan [principal at OVMS] will not be here next year, but she made a comment at my final evaluation conference about the PSB program. She shared with me that she feels that my efforts in implementing a successful PSB program is one of the most significant contributions I make to our school. She feels it's a service that goes beyond the classroom and it speaks highly of me. With these words of confidence and support, I'll continue to make the effort.

THOMPKINS' MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Thompkins Middle School has a unique story to tell. If I had to give titles to each of these stories that I am writing, the Thompkins story would be the easiest one for me to do. Their story is about "The Value of Working Together."

The format for this story is different from the others. Three PSB leaders from Thompkins Middle School, two parents who participated in PSB, and three students in this PSB group sit down with me, and we talk about their PSB program. In this case study, the form of their story really reflects the content of the evaluation: the program is so successful in this school because these parents and leaders and children appreciate the value of working as a team, being organized, offering mutual support to one another, and recognize the importance of parent involvement.

Carolyn Yeager, Marilyn Conder, and Carol Stremming are the three leaders who work together to implement Thompkins' PSB program. They had over 30 parents involved in their PSB program during the first year. Their program continues to be very successful. They credit much of this success to the support and enthusiasm of the parents in their PSB group.

Jerry Nugent and Linda Lee are parents who participate in the Thompkins Middle School PSB program. These parents and their children join the three leaders to talk about the Thompkins' PSB program. It is interesting to listen to the things these parents "learn" from this experience. Some of them come away from this PSB experience possessing a greater respect for their child's thinking and perspective about things. Jerry Nugent describes a commitment to children that every parent can learn from. The parents in this interview credit the success of the Thompkins PSB program to the commitment and enthusiasm of its PSB leaders!

Neither the leaders nor the parents in this PSB group want to take credit for the success of this program. Each group tends to pat the other on the back for making it work. The parents' comments emphasize teamwork. These leaders respect parents' time commitments; they meet early in the evening, make meetings efficient, and end meetings on time. Everything points to their insistence on working as a team.

This interview exemplifies what positive outcomes can occur when parents and teachers work together. We believe this mutual respect for the contribution each group makes toward the success of this PSB program speaks for itself. THEY WORK TOGETHER...it is the effort of both teachers and parents that make Thompkins' program a success story!

Marilyn (leader): We're successful because we have interested parents and children. That really helps us

Jerry (parent): I rest my case when it comes to explaining why this parent program is so successful at our school. It is these three ladies here [gestures to three PSB leaders].

Carolyn (leader): When we started this program, we felt it was important to have a representative at each grade level we have in the middle school. I'm the seventh-grade PSB person, and they [other two PSB leaders] represent our sixth and eighth grades. I basically teach German, but this program sounded real interesting to me. I teach next to Marilyn, and we are

back and forth a lot. She was telling me about this PSB program. It sounded interesting and something different.

Marilyn (leader): We knew when we started this program we just couldn't have one leader. We followed the guides you [PSB] set up for us. You recommended having ten parents in the group, but we knew this would exclude too many parents and children. This is when we decided to have a leader at each grade level. We have parents involved in our PSB program that have children in grades six through eight. By having three leaders who can work together, we can get children at all grades involved.

Carol (leader): We approached this program as a team. We got parents involved by asking students in our classrooms to participate in the program. When we presented the information and materials at the meetings, we worked as a team. Carolyn, Marilyn, and I would take turns presenting sections of the information to the group so that it wasn't entirely led by any one person. After we presented the material, we would break up into groups so that we had the sixth grade group, the seventh grade group, and the eighth grade group. This worked well for us.

We tried hard to keep our meetings to an hour. I think we felt this sent a message to parents that we knew their time was valuable. We wanted them to know that when they came to our meetings they could plan on an hour and that would be it. Our meetings were early enough in the evening, and we kept them to an hour so that parents could rely on this. We felt that if we planned our meetings earlier in the evening and ended them when we said they would end, then parents would feel that there was still time after the meetings to do other things at home or do whatever they had to do after the meeting. We didn't ask them to give up a great deal of time for PSB meetings.

We met at 6:30 and concluded promptly at 7:30. We, as leaders, provided snacks and drinks for some meetings. This is especially nice to do for the first meeting. I also think it's real important to keep the meetings going. We didn't "waste" their time. We presented the information. If we had forms to fill out, we did that, discussed things, and quickly moved on.

It was our own personal beliefs that led us to conduct the meetings this way. We don't like to go to meetings where everybody is just sitting around and not doing anything. We wanted things to move along, and when the time was up we wanted everybody to leave having success and feeling it was a worthwhile kind of thing.

Jerry (parent): I think this is why our meetings were such a success. I felt our meetings were efficient, and the hour they took was worth my attending them. Having three leaders helped to keep things going. It was like having one leader, because these three ladies work together so smoothly. When one person stopped, the other one, who knew that person well enough, just picked it up right from there. There was no confusion, there was no lapse, no review, and those meetings just moved right along. Our group was lucky—we had the input and benefit from three different people instead of one, and it didn't take them any longer to accomplish this! People can be motivated to attend meetings like this when they aren't drawn out.

Linda (parent): I never felt the size of the group was a problem. We did meet in large groups to receive information and materials, and then break up into small groups. There was this support that we gathered from other parents in the same situation. I remember feeling so much better after

talking to other parents whose children didn't like to read, or who were having trouble with reading. I would always come away with different ideas. This sharing was so motivational for me.

Carol (leader): Our large group of thirty-some parents worked, but we knew when we started that we couldn't limit our program at Thompkins to just 10 parents. If we wanted to reach more parents, we needed more leaders. I do feel that if you get too large a group, then it sort of intimidates or restrains conversation at the meetings. It was very important that we broke our large group out into smaller groups during each meeting. During these small group meetings, parents felt far more free to express their opinions. When we broke up into groups, we had some very fine discussions.

Linda (parent): The parents in our group came for different reasons. My daughter doesn't like to read, and she experiences some difficulty with reading. This program helped us find ways to read together that were enjoyable for both of us. I won't say that it has improved her reading, but at least she is reading more, and we are doing it together.

It was hard for her to get excited about a book. PSB helped me see how I could help her. Our reading usually starts out with me starting the book by reading the first couple of chapters [aloud]. By the end of the year [program] we were reading parallel. I would read a chapter and tell her a little bit about it, and then this would encourage her to read further on her own. I'd encourage her by saying things like, "Jennifer, wait till you get to chapter 30. You're not going to believe what they did!" She'd say, "Tell me what happened." Then I'd say, "You've got to read it!" This kind of encouragement would get her going and keep her interested in what we were reading.

The best thing about being involved in PSB has been the change in Jennifer. The program has accomplished a good thing—it has gotten her reading on her own. She still isn't an avid reader and still needs this kind of encouragement from me, but this has been an enjoyable experience for both of us.

Jerry (parent): I'm very fortunate. I have a child who is very inquisitive. There's a lot of questions that he wants answered that a mere mortal can't answer! [With these kinds of questions] you have to go to reference, research, libraries, and wherever you can find the information. I'm lucky because he's been encouraged from "day one." This program [PSB] just fortified, just brought it all together for us. It's like: "Here's what we can do. We can do it separately or together, but we can still do it. And we can expand it to mean something more for us."

It's made a difference, and if parents just try it once they'll want to stay with it [PSB]. I've noticed the difference in Nicholas [Jerry's son]. I have gone into Nicholas' room to see what he was up to, and there he was reading. It used to be, he would read only when he had to. When somebody assigned something, he would do it but only because it had to be done. His attitude was: "I have to read this," or "I don't want to read it, but I have to read it." Now it's: "Would you take me to the library? I want to get a book." A couple of weeks ago he wanted a book on mystery, and we went over and got the book. There was no: "Go in your room, shut the TV off, and read this book." It just wasn't needed. Instead it was like: "I've got a book that I want to read and I'm going to read it." It [PSB] has really helped.

Nicholas Nugent: I used to not want to read. And now I go back to my own room and read by myself, because I *want* to read.

Jerry [parent]: When Nicholas would bring a book home from school, I'd go to the library to get another copy. We've tried a lot of the suggestions given at our PSB meetings. We tried reading separately, and that was fine. We tried Nicholas reading a chapter and then me; rotating it back and forth. This worked excellently for us. We've read a lot of books that you [PSB] have supplied, and we've read a lot more that you haven't that we wanted to read. We've read some books that I had a hard time getting interested in, but because one of us was interested in it, both of us were.

There was one book, *Anne of Green Gables*, that Nicholas enjoyed, but personally it was a difficult book for me to get through...but we did! We talked about this up-front. Once we start a book, we're going to finish it. We do have different interests at times. But we were able to balance those differences. Nicholas would pick one book and when it was finished, it was my turn to pick the next book.

Nicholas and I do a lot of things together, and I also have tried to expose Nicholas to other types of reading that aren't found in books. There are other things in life that we can learn to read with and gain knowledge from besides books. We do a lot of mountain biking and tours. We've been to places that neither one of us has been before. We're expected to ride 33 miles, and if you get lost it can really be frustrating to back up 10 miles because you missed a turn. It can teach you to read very quickly and very efficiently.

This was the example I wanted to share with parents at one of our meetings. On these bike tours, I would let Nick take the lead. He had the map, and he'd have to find Old School House Road and turn right. If you're from that part of the country, that's pretty easy. But when you take a map and try to figure out where you must turn in an area you aren't familiar with, you must read other types of symbols that aren't in books. We've done this type of reading together.

I've put Nick in the lead knowing that if we miss a turn or something it's because we weren't paying attention or reading properly or we misunderstood or we didn't have a thorough working knowledge of what was going on. We can apply this same type of reading to other reading. Reading is always trying to get meaning, and whether it's reading road maps, reading plays for some sport or reading a book, reading is everywhere...it's endless. Parents need to understand the different ways they can expand their children's reading opportunities and experiences.

Candice (student whose parent was not present during our interview): I do a lot of reading, and I enjoy reading. I just thought it would be neat to do this program together, because it would be something we could do together. I don't read any more than I used to, but I think it has brought us closer. Now we can talk about the books we are reading...and I read a lot of them! We ask each other about books, and we never did that before. It's just neat to have your mom interested in what you are reading and thinking about, and I like that she is reading things I like to read. We tried reading harder books together. We got the book by Edgar Allan Poe and my mom told me it was kind of hard, but we started reading it together at night. Each night we would take turns reading the book. We got through it, too!

Linda (parent): I had talked with her mother at the beginning of this year's program. She knew I had been with the program last year, and asked me about the kinds of books we were reading in PSB. I told her we had all kinds of books and that it was real easy to find something you liked.

It's been more difficult for Jennifer and me to do the program this year. Her reading teacher this year is not involved with PSB like her reading teacher was last year. That's how we became involved...Jennifer's teacher was a leader and provided a lot of encouragement. Jennifer heard that they were doing PSB again this year and these teachers [3 PSB leaders] said she could come to the meetings anyway. It helps when teachers are encouraging children to stay in the program. I also think it helps when the PSB books are in the teacher's room. Children see them and are encouraged to either join the group or continue to be involved with the program.

We also know that we don't have to stay in the PSB group in order to continue reading at home. The group helped us get started, but we are continuing to read together at home.

Carolyn (leader): I've had two parents make comments to me that they liked the program because of their middle child. Their middle child was in the program and it helped them to make time for this middle child. In both cases, the parent felt their middle child was left out. They were really impressed that it [PSB] helped give this middle child a little one-on-one time—it helped to get the parent and child together.

That was their main reason for getting involved in our *Parents Sharing Books* program. It forced them to do something with this child they kept leaving out. And they said they also felt bad because they never had the time. They found out from being in PSB that just driving to dance and going to basketball practice or whatever, they could talk about the books in the car. What once had been empty time in the car was now made full.

Marilyn (leader): I feel that our PSB program has affected what is going on in my own classroom. We read a lot of novels in my class. I have noticed a lot of my students come to class and remark about their parents reading the same book at home. I think this is great! I have had students say, "Well my mom wants to see this about such and such a book," or "My dad said this about this book." I think this is happening because we talk up PSB to the students in our class and the books that we are reading in class are going home. It's great to hear that these parents are picking their children's books up and reading them. These parents are picking the book up and finding out what it's about and what their children are reading. I'm sure that many of them are discovering books that they might not have considered reading and really enjoying it. There is a group of parents we can't account for because they may not actually be in our [PSB] program, but I think our efforts are reaching out to others indirectly.

Linda (parent): I found it interesting that some books actually helped us talk about things—family concerns and personal experiences. One particular book enabled us to discuss very personal things—boy-girl relationships. We had some interesting conversations. Some of the books we read were real good conversation starters.

Jerry (parent): One thing that I caught on to quickly was the different ways people can think! Nicholas and I would read a chapter aloud and talk about it. Things that I thought were a major factor in the chapter would go straight over Nicholas' head. He might dwell on another point. Many times it was his ideas, insight, or perspective that was picked up in the next chapter. His

thinking was more on target than mine. It was interesting to see him think and hear his perspective. I learned that age difference and experience influence Nicholas' and my perspective and opinion about many things.

It [PSB] didn't bring Nicholas and me any closer because we were already extremely close. We do a lot together. He's my son, and he's my friend. It's been like that from day one. It's [PSB] just one more way I can be part of his education and his life. My wife Linda feels the same way. She fills in when I can't or when it's something I'm not interested in but she is.

I don't understand why more fathers don't get involved in things like this. I'm just going to tell you my personal experience which started when Nicholas went into first grade. I was a representative all through Highland [Nicholas' elementary school] which is one of the feeder schools for Thompkins. I've been volunteered by the PTA for math committees and whatever. I really enjoy this. I don't understand why this stereotype "if it's an educational thing it's got to be the mother involved" exists.

Our meetings were scheduled so that more than just mothers could attend. Parents that work have personal days, sick days, or whatever. If you want to go to things, you go to the things that are priorities. Nicholas is my priority. I have been called to go to work, but have marked off because there was a room party. Here's how I look at it. I'm only going to have Nicholas until the summer after 12th grade. After that time he will be off to school or wherever, and he is as good as gone from our home. Surely, for this length of time I can give up something because after the summer of his 12th grade, it's going to be all my time. Eighteen or nineteen years devoted to Nicholas isn't a lot of time out of my life, but it is a lot of valuable time in Nicholas' life.

Marilyn (leader): We have a very traditional picture of what fathers are supposed to be in society. I think this is something we can change in our PSB program. Perhaps we can encourage entire families to participate; not just the mom who traditionally accepts the role of "school monitor". Another reason I would like to see the whole family involved is we have a breakdown of the family in society right now. Even when you're together, you're separated. You're going three different directions. I think being in middle school and having children at this age, brings more separation to families. Children are involved in numerous things, and there is less time for all these extra-curricular activities such as *Parents Sharing Books*.

I like what the community of New Harmony did for families. They set aside a particular night of the week as "Family Night." There couldn't be any school meetings or athletic events. I thought this was a great idea! We forget to make time for families, and the school can really help the entire community when they recognize and are willing to support things such as this.

Their [New Harmony's] move to make the "family" important gives me an idea for our program. Our *Parents Sharing Books* program could turn into a "Family Night." Invite families to the middle school, and if you have a third-grader, bring everybody in the family along regardless of age.

Candice (student): I'm involved in my church, I go to 4-H, and do a lot of other things, but having a night like this might be okay. It was hard for my mom and me to find time, but we were able to work it out. This might help.

Jerry (parent): We not only need to keep this program, we need to expand it. We had what I would consider quality information and experiences in a relatively small amount of time. So many more people could be helped if it could somehow be presented differently. What I mean by that is getting the attention it deserves. I think this school has been very fortunate to have this [PSB] program. It is a program that hasn't cost us anything to have. I can't understand why some schools wouldn't take advantage of such an opportunity. I'm concerned that schools may not continue PSB if it has to come out of their budget.

We want more people involved in it next year. This type of extra-curricular activity is down-played. It needs to be emphasized and brought to more parents' attention. If we can get the attention of parents, then children will benefit. If this thing [PSB] could get the exposure it needs, it could really take off, and it would be unbelievable. If parents try it once, they'll stay with it. I know we'll be in it next year!

Carolyn (leader): Our first year we talked to the students in our own classes about participating in PSB. I don't think this information got home to parents. I think in the coming year we need to get it out to the parents directly and inform them what is happening. We thought that if the child was interested it would work. I still think the child's interest in the program is important, but I think parents need the information first. If the parent is interested, this can motivate the child.

Marilyn (leader): I very much like the idea of trying to involve more fathers and more parents; even sets of parents so if one can't come the other one can.

There are things that probably all of us [Thompkins group] would do a bit differently next year. I think the three of us [PSB leaders] are willingly to "experiment" with several things next year. We really want to develop more parent participation, and we are aware that contacting parents and scheduling meetings are important factors.

I like the new book [PSB manual]. It is well organized, very easy to use, and there are things in it that we didn't do that I would like very much to do. Suggestions for encouraging and contacting parents about PSB with letters and forms can really help us.

Carol (leader): I think one of the major stumbling blocks we had this year was scheduling. Scheduling is a problem, and you [FLC support] can't do anything about that. We have to get our meetings on the school calendar early. We thought we did get our meeting dates on early enough, but we found out later that there were two school calendar sign-ups! We'll make sure that doesn't happen to us again!

Marilyn (leader): The one thing that does concern us is the opportunity for elementary people to take advantage of this program. I think it would be very beneficial at the elementary schools. I have seen what it has done for our parents and children, and I'm sure the elementary people would appreciate this same opportunity. But this program has been something just for us...just for middle school. When something like this program goes to the elementary and students then come to the middle school, it's old by the time they get here.

Carolyn (leader): We have tried to do *Book It* at the middle school. It's not going well, and I think it's because they have done it before at the elementary schools. If it's something that we introduce at the middle school, I think it generates more interest that if it's something we try to

"continue." Let them continue to do *Book* It at the elementary and then they [students] can step right into this [PSB]. Kids will be more enthusiastic because they'll think, "Well, I haven't done this before and it's something different than what we did in elementary school." It's just nice having *Parents Sharing Books* as our own little thing.

Jerry (parent): We've got a lot of things going for us. We want to keep this program going. There are people involved who want to make it work and we're willing to change some things so that more parents can take advantage of it. But I can tell you three things we just aren't going to change...we're keeping our three leaders!

ENDNOTE: This report is being written a year after our interview with this PSB group, and Carol Stremming continues to send good news about the PSB program at Thompkins Middle School:

> You might like to know that at our final [PSB] meeting this year we had a high school student come talk to our entire PSB group (students and parents) about the importance of reading and the impact reading has on being a successful student. He speaks from experience. Then we had some oral entertaining reading from some of our student PSB participants. The principal of our school provided pizza and pop to end this meeting.

The PSB leaders at Thompkins Middle School also wrote an article about their *Parents Sharing Books* program; Conder, M., Yeager, C., and Stremming, C. (1993). PSB spells success for middle school students. *Indiana Reading Quarterly*, 25, 4, 14-15

MADISON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Overview: At the time of our interview, Mr. Cummins is a first-year principal at the Madison Junior High School. He talks about his experience as an elementary principal before becoming a junior high principal. As I listen to him talk about students, parents, and schools, one of his strengths is having this elementary experience. He understands the type of parent involvement that exists at the elementary level, and he recognizes how to achieve effective parent involvement. Mr. Cummins states that parents are involved at the elementary for more positive types of things, whereas parents are called in to the school for more negative reasons at the junior high and secondary levels. Mr. Cummins believes that some teachers at this junior high are eager to develop positive relationships with parents. These are the teachers he approaches to implement programs such as *Parents Sharing Books*.

"Transition" is a good word to describe Mr. Cummins' situation. He has moved to a junior high setting, but sees his elementary experience as an important factor in making changes at the junior high level. His first concern is the students. He sees junior high students being forced to accommodate to a setting that they may not be ready for. Mr. Cummins sees changing the learning environment at this level so that it is more appropriate for students. Because of his elementary experience, he understands things like collaborative learning, group work, hands-on activities, modeling, student sharing, and other teaching strategies that may be foreign to some junior high teachers. He has seen children learning when they are out of their seats, and he can appreciate seating arrangements that encourage children to share their thoughts and ideas with one another. His comment about junior high and high schools may be hard for some teachers at this level to accept: "Junior high and high schools as we know them today are not necessarily structured for the benefit of students. I see them as being arranged more for the convenience of teachers."

Initiating change is another significant theme in Mr. Cummins' interview. Mr. Cummins is very candid about what he would like to see change in his school, but he is also realistic about how these changes must evolve. His teachers are at the center of these changes and he understands how change takes place—the teachers are his change agents, and they must also see the need for change. He sees "forcing" change as the worst possible way to achieve this.

Mr. Cummins sees PSB and the other Lilly projects his school is involved in as laying the foundation for initiating change in his school. Teachers are approaching him about things they would like to do and grants they would like to take advantage of. He supports their enthusiasm with his enthusiasm and encouragement.

He is very supportive of his teachers, and the *Parents Sharing Books* program that is in their school. He sees himself as a facilitator for their *Parents Sharing Books* program. "I lend the support our PSB leaders need. I come to the meetings and participate when it's appropriate, but I really let Sue and Alanagh shape the program how they see it benefitting parents and children most. I am there to support them, but also to let parents see that I'm interested in this program and appreciate their efforts in participating in the program."

Mr. Cummins doesn't claim to have any secrets about getting parents involved, but the changes he is making are working. Parents have taken on positive roles within his school. When

the parent advisory board voiced their opinion about not wanting to be just a "fund raising" organization, Mr. Cummins let them lead the way in changing this image. The parent advisory board gathered parents together to listen to speakers talk about specific topics local parents were interested in. This board established an academic excellence program for students in the middle grades. Parents are beginning to take responsibility for the communication between school and homes and developing a network system for reaching out to their community as a valuable resource. Mr. Cummins sees the big picture in promoting education and participation—partnerships between the school, the parents and their children, and the community and its resources.

His respect for students in the change process is apparent. Mr. Cummins understands that respect is earned and not demanded. He earns the respect of students by respecting and valuing their input and role in this school. One gets the impression that faculty and staff are at this school for the "benefit of kids." Madison Junior High School wants to initiate a SSR [sustained silent reading] period next year. He has spent time talking to students who will be involved in this reading experience. Mr. Cummins wants their input, but also explains to them how important their responsibility and behavior are in implementing this program. When the *Book Shop* wasn't going very well, he changed schedules so that students could be more involved. "This made it better for their schedules"—better for them. Mr. Cummins' beliefs about cooperative learning and positive dialogues are extensions of how he talks and works with students beyond the classroom.

He is looking for better things for his students and Madison Junior High School. Mr. Cummins explains that *Parents Sharing Books* is something that is good for his school. "*Parents Sharing Books* has provided us with materials and support that gave us curriculum direction for promoting positive parent involvement. Other funds have provided equipment, but this [PSB] program provided educational direction—the how-to. I am confident that if funding organizations like Lilly could see what we have done with this money or the opportunity PSB has provided, they would see that the money has been well spent."

Mr. Cummins: The community of Madison is probably not your typical community. Academically, it is probably just like any other school system. Madison is located in southern Indiana, and it has a lot of historic roots. Many of the families from this area have been here a long time. We have a couple of different things working here. We are in an area where economic growth such as bringing in industry isn't happening in large degrees, but we do have a few industrial groups. Madison is beginning to move toward a tourist industry. Some of the people in the community are for that, and there are others who are not for this.

Madison is actually divided physically into two areas. There is the lower valley area, the traditional, old historic downtown area, that rests along the Ohio River. Up the hill is the other part of Madison where you have the new subdivisions, shopping centers, and the fast food chains. These two areas make up Madison, but they don't always agree on things.

For the most part it's a neat place to live. We are targeted as one of the poorer counties in the state, we have our share of problems, and it is rather isolated. But it is a good place to bring up a family. Our oldest daughter graduates this year, and we feel she has gotten a good education. There are some opportunities that aren't available to us, but we are very pleased with the education our own children are getting. We're close to an hour away from Louisville and Cincinnati, and two hours from Indianapolis. Hanover College is just a couple of miles from

Madison so there are cultural things we can take advantage of if we want to. Those that are interested in their children's education and want to expose them to things beyond their own community take advantage of these things.

Madison has a seven, eight, and nine grade level junior high school. It is one out of sixteen junior highs in the state with this type of grade range. Next year we'll probably be one out of eleven in the state. This isn't a popular mix for junior highs. Whether we change still remains an issue for our corporation.

I'd like to see us go to a six, seven, and eight or just a straight seven and eight. With the set-up as it is, we have such a tie with the high school through athletics, band, choir, and high school credits. I think it would be more manageable if ninth graders were moved to the high school.

We run into problems with the ninth grade being in the junior high. This year we had two ninth grade boys starting on the varsity basketball team. This makes us at the junior high responsible for two schedules.

I have been a principal for nine years. This is my first year as a junior high principal. I find that my experience as an elementary principal can apply to this [junior high level]. Basically, you are still dealing with children and their needs.

It's been a learning experience for me. What I've tried to do is bring many of the qualities that are found at the elementary level. Junior highs are typically operated like high schools, but many students at this level—sixth-, seventh-, or whatever grades comprise a junior high—aren't ready for such a drastic change.

I've tried to provide change in this building in a subtle way. I don't believe in coming into a new situation and saying, "We're going to do this or we're going to do that." Tradition is hard to break, and change is hard to make, especially when people get comfortable with what they are doing. I have to be careful how I go about making these changes, selling programs, selling ideas, and so on. I think we're [teachers and staff] starting to open up and be more receptive to those kinds of changes. I'm learning whom to approach for certain projects. I think those who have wanted to do some different things are starting to come forward, because they see that I'm interested and willing to offer my support. These programs [Lilly grants] have had some effect on how we can begin to initiate change in our school.

When I first came in as principal, the English teachers were really wanting to have a SSR [sustained silent reading] period. I liked that idea, but I'm glad I didn't have to come in and say: "Hey, we're going to do this." I think that through some different things like *Parents Sharing Books* and the other Lilly projects we're involved in we can begin to look at new schedules, classroom environments, and teaching approaches without too much disruption, controversy, or whatever comes with change.

One of the things we are doing next week is through *Rural Youth Reading* grant. We are going to be talking to seventh- and eighth-grade students about reading—reading for pleasure. We want to talk to them about the possibility of SSR next year and how it might work. The Lilly

projects we are involved in have supported what we are trying to promote in our school, and that's making reading an important part of school and home.

The language arts trend in the elementary schools is becoming less dependent on textbooks and is moving toward an increased use of trade books; using textbooks as resources rather than the lesson plan. Reading aloud, cooperative learning, the writing process, and involving parents reflect a philosophy in the lower grades that feeds right into and should carry on into the middle school level. This is what I would like to see our school move toward, but better yet, I'm seeing teachers in this building who want those same things. Change is better when it is in this direction.

Basically, I see myself as a facilitator for our *Parents Sharing Books* program. I lend the support our PSB leaders need. We sit down before a PSB meeting and talk about what is going to happen and what we need to do to get ready for this PSB meeting. I make sure that the school provides cokes and candy or sandwiches and those kinds of things so that this doesn't become a financial burden for the [PSB] team. I come to the meetings and participate when it's appropriate. I really let Sue and Alanagh shape the program how they see it benefitting parents and children most. I am there to support them, but also to let parents see that I'm interested in this program and appreciate their efforts in participating in the program.

Sue [PSB teacher-leader] has been the roots of our program. I had approached another teacher about doing the *Parents Sharing Books* project in our school, but I didn't get any response. I knew Sue was already involved in another program, but she also shared the PSB information with me. Sue said she would be interested in doing it and said it sounded like something that would go well with the reading aloud program she was doing. We had to hurry up and get things approved by the board so she could participate in the PSB seminar.

Sue has been very involved with getting our *Parents Sharing Books* program off to a good start. She is very good about sharing with other teachers and she builds their interest in getting involved in things that are being offered at school. Sue has kind of turned into our contact person and has taken on the responsibility of finding out about programs that we can participate in. She makes a point to keep me informed about PSB meetings and what's going on with parents and students in the group. Sue has just been very enthusiastic about the whole process of getting PSB started and instrumental in getting other things going in our school.

We needed something positive in the way of parent involvement at our school. Before this year, we had very little parent involvement. It's not that parents were shut out or anything like that, but there hadn't been any effort made to do positive things with parents.

A parent advisory board has been established. We have parent meetings so that all parents are welcome. We talk with parents, and have them involved in different things. One of the things we learned from these parent meetings was that parents wanted a parent group, but they didn't want anything like the elementary PTO's or PTA's where they were major fund-raisers for the school. I was glad to hear this—they don't want it and we [faculty and administration] don't want this type of organization.

At some of these parent meetings we have had guest speakers that have talked about various topics that parents have been interested in. This parent advisory board has started some

other programs such as our academic excellence program. For the first time this year, we're giving academic letters along with athletic letters. We give academic letters each semester. The student must have a 3.5 average for the semester and have no discipline reports or a tardy during the semester.

Another thing we have been concerned with is communication. Parents are concerned about communication. We all realize that middle school children just do not take things home. We have had parents actually be in charge of the communication for upcoming projects. The school received information about certain projects or programs, got the information to parents, and these parents notified other parents. It's a slow beginning and it's going to take some time to evolve, but this networking is making more direct contacts, increasing the number of parents involved, and giving us contacts in the community to rely on for some support.

We are trying to involve parents through a strategic planning process. The corporation is involved in this planning, but we are trying to develop the program with a more community-based approach rather than a school-based approach. We have ideas for a couple of programs that will reach parents with different age levels of children. We think that to reach the majority of parents, we are going to have to come at it from a community focus rather than a school focus. Many parents that aren't involved in the school as parents had negative experiences themselves as students—many were unsuccessful at school, and school has a negative connotation for them. We realize that if the school is the only institution to provide these services, those same parents are not going to be involved. It has to be some of the social agencies of the community that get parents involved, too. The school must still do its part, but the school has to develop partnerships with the community and social agencies available to them.

We're trying to do our part by offering programs such as *Parents Sharing Books*. Our first PSB group started out with just parents of seventh-graders. We made direct contact with the seventh-grade parents when we started our first PSB group. We decided that the seventh-grade, having just come out of the sixth-grade, had more experience with using trade-books and the kind of book-sharing experience that we were promoting in PSB. We sent letters to every seventh-grade parent, our parent PSB leader made several parent contacts, and the parent advisory board was informed about PSB so they could send out the word. We had eighteen to twenty parents come to our first meeting. Our numbers weren't always that high for every meeting.

Parents Sharing Books has been a very positive experience for me because of the parents who got involved. Being at those meetings and listening to their comments was encouraging. They would say such things as, "This is the first time that we really had an opportunity to talk about something other than the typical day-to-day operation type things." Others mentioned that, "We actually got a little dialogue going about some feelings. Some ideas came up that I hadn't thought about. My thoughts were completely different from what my child thought." Just comments like, "We actually stopped for a minute and sat down to take some time for each other," or "This helped us slow down a little. During this time, we didn't worry about being at practice or lessons. We actually concentrated on other things in our life." These comments impressed me in a positive way. All of our lives get carried away very easily, and I think parents' comments indicated that they were appreciative of the time PSB made them spend with their children.

My wife and my son, who is a seventh-grader, were involved in this program. I thought this would be a good opportunity for them to share—mother and son sharing. Our son is an

excellent student, but he doesn't particularly choose to read when he doesn't have to. He wasn't real thrilled with this idea so my wife and he had to build this experience up.

They tried several different approaches to "shared" reading. They started out taking turns reading pages or chapters and then discussing as they went along. By the end of the semester, she [mother] was doing most of the reading. He [son] enjoyed this. It wasn't that he couldn't read, but having his mom read to him was more relaxing. He didn't constantly look at the clock and watch the time. Once they found the "right" approach for them, both of them really enjoyed it.

They shared [books] at different times of the day. We don't set aside a certain time to read at night. We just read when there is time! If you like to read, this works because you will always find some time during the day to do something you like to do.

I think my wife would probably agree that group support is very helpful. She is a teacher and very busy with school and family things. Even though there wasn't a set time for reading, both of them were conscious that they would read some time during the day. Being part of PSB makes parents more conscious of the need to read at home—it works as a reminder or a support group.

Our *Parents Sharing Books* program hasn't reached all the parents we need to reach. Many of the parents who are involved have children who are doing average or better than average work in school. Reaching the parent whose child isn't doing well in school leaves us with a big question—How do we get them involved? Many of these parents have been involved with the school in negative situations.

I think what schools need to do is sensationalize the positive things that are going on in the school. When students go home and parents ask, "How was school?," most kids will talk about the negative—the fights, the confrontations, and so on. Not too many kids go home and talk about the awards given for the day or the different things going on in the classroom that day.

This is what we have tried to work on this year. We want the positive events that are happening in the school to get out of the building and into homes and the community. You do that by involving the community and promoting good advertisement or coverage. A good example of this kind of coverage was when we organized a "Code Blue Day" here at school. We devoted one day to nothing but social issues that involve teenagers—suicide, drugs, pregnancy, AIDS, alcohol, and a variety of other topics. We had professional groups come in and make presentations. We had 50-60 community people volunteer to come in and talk about topics they were knowledgeable about. We had a myriad of people here that day who held mini-classes or -workshops. The students could sign up for two or three different workshops.

It turned out to be a super day. The local newspaper picked up on what was going on, and gave us tremendous coverage. We actually got three days' coverage out of a one-day program. The newspaper people wrote about what we were preparing to do, they were here the day we had "Code Blue Day," and they interviewed people about what had happened that day. They talked to students and others who were involved in this day. It was a very positive day, because the staff, the students, the parents, and the community worked together. Kids told us, "Thank you." And this is unusual for kids at this age to say something like this!

This day got us thinking about other areas we could expand into. We have talked about starting something that would be language arts the entire day. This day would be nothing but activities or mini-workshops focusing around language arts. Our *Parents Sharing Books* program would fit perfectly into this theme day. We want to expose what we have to offer parents and students, and we also want to expand what we have.

We need to build our support from the inside to the outside. It doesn't mean much when teachers or educators are blowing their own horns. We need parents, community people, and local industry talking about and supporting what we are doing, and the only way to do that is to involve them in positive ways.

Parents Sharing Books has provided us with materials and support that gave us curriculum direction for promoting positive parent involvement. Other funds have provided equipment, but this [PSB] program provided educational direction—the how to. I am confident that if funding organizations like Lilly could see what we have done with this money or opportunity PSB has provided, they would see that the money has been well spent.

Sometimes I worry that it is always the same teachers that take advantage of these opportunities, but I do feel we have the right person to be doing our PSB program. I'm glad these opportunities are out there. They allow the more enthusiastic teacher, the more involved teacher, an opportunity to try some things that may not be available through regular school funds. Such opportunities as PSB encourages teachers to keep fresh and to constantly be interested in what's going on in education. Without opportunities like this, the better teacher isn't rewarded and provided incentive. We need to keep PSB in the forefront so others can see what we have done with assistance from outside the school. These are positive partnerships.

Sue Miller's and Alanagh Pimlott's Story

Overview: Sue Miller's and Alanagh Pimlott's story is one that many schools throughout the state can identify with. They confirm Mr. Cummins' appraisal: Until recently, parent involvement has never been encouraged at Madison Junior School. Sue Miller and Alanagh Pimlott are showing parents that parent involvement is not so much a way for parents to get more involved with the school as it is for them to get more involved with their children and with their children's education and development. The attitudes that Sue and Alanagh are trying to recast as PSB leaders come from within this building as well as from outside it. What their story provides for those of us who read it is an opportunity. They see *Parents Sharing Books* as an opportunity to "begin" a transformation in attitudes about parent involvement—a transformation that will benefit their community.

Sue Miller is an eighth-grade language arts teacher. She has a reserved presence about her, but when Sue talks about her students and the parents involved in PSB, an easy smile comes across her face, and there is warmth and sincerity in her voice. There is a clear contrast between Sue's personality and Alanagh Pimlott's personality. Alanagh is self-assured and outgoing. She is able to put things into perspective when it comes to her family commitments and part-time CPA work with a local accounting firm. I admire and appreciate her sense of humor and easy-going disposition when I listen to her talk about her family. She talks with me about some of the things they are involved in, and during our conversation Alanagh comments about her own job and how

difficult it is sometimes to juggle everyone's schedules: "I know that it is tax season, but really. Why should I disrupt my family for three months out of the year? I am willing to give them my four hours a day, but it's got to be when it's convenient for my family!"

When Sue and Alanagh talk with me about their program, both of these ladies see important changes that must be made so that the needs of their parents are met. They listen to the comments of participants and are moving toward a PSB program that is active throughout the entire school year. Alanagh comments that parents in the first group were disappointed when the training was over. This feeling prompts Sue and Alanagh to consider conducting more meetings during the school year and encouraging new parents to join the group throughout the year.

Sue comments about how she has observed parents making book choices for their children, and she realizes that children must be involved in this process. Sue is concerned as a teacher that parents in their group are the decision makers when it comes to selecting books. Sue is aware that she must emphasize to parents that they need to rely on their children's needs and interests when making these choices.

Parents in the Madison PSB program want their children to participate in the PSB meetings so Sue and Alanagh are letting kids be a part of this movement for more positive parent involvement. By including children in their meetings, Sue and Alanagh are aware that some type of activities must be planned to include children effectively in these meetings. Sue and Alanagh see the staff at the Family Literacy Center as providing this structure by including additional activities and materials in the PSB manual.

Sue and Alanagh present detailed and practical suggestions about how they can improve their PSB program. One of their goals is to excite other teachers in their school about getting involved in PSB. Their *Parents Sharing Books* program is demonstrating to teachers that parent involvement doesn't have to be negative involvment.

Sue and Alanagh work as a team, and they rely on their divergent qualities when running this PSB program. Alanagh feels confident and is enthusiastic about conducting some parts of the parent meetings, and Sue is comfortable with letting her do this. When I direct a question to Sue during our conversation, she turns to Alanagh and says "You probably know more about that than I do." Alanagh does the same to Sue when she isn't sure about something. They provide a sense of 'togetherness' as I listen to them talk about their program.

Sue and Alanagh recognize an important member of their team—their school principal Larry Cummins. The three of them work closely in planning the *Parents Sharing Books* program at Madison Junior High. Sue, Alanagh, and Mr. Cummins, the principal, are in a situation where 'change' has not always been looked upon in positive ways. The kind of support they provide each other and the benefits that parents are receiving from participating in PSB serve as incentives for continuing to involve parents in positive ways in their school. Mr. Cummins, Sue, and Alanagh share the responsibility for getting their PSB program going, and they do it with enthusiasm and commitment. They look beyond their first year and envision the expansion of their program and how that involves other teachers, agencies, and parents. They are realistic in this vision and anticipate that these changes will take time. We believe their efforts in working together to accomplish successful parent involvement set an example for other PSB leaders.

Alanagh: Madison is in an area that it is fairly homogenous as far as race is concerned. We have a few African-Americans and a few Asians, but it is mostly a White population. There is more diversity in our socio-economic groups. We have incomes running the spectrum from wealthy to very poor. We still have a few people living in homes in this area that are without electricity. This is southern Indiana, and the rest of the state may not understand the poverty some of the people in this area live in. You don't find these people in our city limits, but our school corporation covers approximately a thirty-mile radius, and within this area there are a lot of students living in poverty. At least one of the homes in the hills is just a cabin with no doors, no windows, and dirt floors.

This is such an isolated area geographically. We are the largest town in a fifty-mile radius. Everything around us is rural, and it takes longer to travel around here because of the hills and the highway system. There is a tremendous amount of poverty in this area. There are people in this town who have never been outside the city limits. Many of the people in our rural area have never been outside the county. We are kind of in this forgotten pocket of the state.

We have eight elementary schools that feed into our junior high school. We have two elementary schools that serve the newer part or area of Madison, two elementary buildings that serve the downtown or historic part of Madison, and four elementary schools that cover the surrounding rural area.

The family backgrounds of the children in some of these rural elementary schools are predominantly low-income population. Many of these families haven't valued education for generations. We did a survey in the elementary schools of the parents' educational background. In one of these rural schools, there wasn't any parent that had gone on to higher education. This reflects a different way of thinking for most of us sitting here [at this interview]. This kind of thinking affects our junior high school, because these children will eventually come to our school. There isn't a mixture of races, but there is a tremendous difference in cultural backgrounds that are worlds apart.

Sue: This difference in cultural backgrounds causes some problems at this [junior high] age. There is a conflict between rural and city expectations. We have a number of students whose family expectations are, "You stay in school until you're sixteen, and then you quit so you can come back and work on the farm." This is a very strong expectation for some of our students in this situation. Their parents don't encourage them to finish high school, but, instead, to get married and have children.

Alanagh: We aren't talking about quitting school and going home to farm great amounts of land. Most of the students we are talking about return to farms less than 100 acres— very small farms, sometimes small tobacco farms, that can hardly support one family.

Most of the parents coming to participate in our PSB program weren't from this rural population. I don't know how many of the parents participating in PSB have double incomes, but I would say most of our parents were in the average to higher income bracket.

I can think of one mother in the PSB group who lives in this rural area. I don't know exactly where she lives, but she could have driven fifteen to twenty miles one way just to come to this PSB meeting at the junior high. We called every parent who was at our first meeting and

reminded them about the next meeting coming up. I'm sure we called her, but she never came back after that first meeting. Maybe distance was a problem, but I had the feeling that she felt uncomfortable and felt like she didn't fit in.

Sue: I can see this happening, but I also see where students might influence their parents' participation in something like PSB. An example of this is when I took my middle- and lower-level ninth grade classes to the high school. Students made negative comments about going to the high school with a different "group." If that's not their "group", then they are not going to be comfortable where they don't know anyone.

I'm thinking about this same incident, and how this mother might have gone home and talked about PSB with her child. If the child didn't know anybody in the group, then he or she might not have encouraged the mother to continue. The child wouldn't be comfortable in a group where he or she doesn't know anybody, and this might influence how much or what [types of things] the parent gets involved in at school.

Parents can feel the same way. It's hard to go somewhere when you don't know anybody, and particularly if your own child doesn't know anyone in the group. Parents might not know each other, but many times the one thing they have in common is their children—the children know each other. And if you aren't an outgoing person to begin with, this makes it even harder. It is unfortunate that people feel this way, but I was encouraged by the fact that this mother at least was interested enough to come to the first meeting.

Alanagh: Larry [the principal] was good about seeing that every parent was aware of our *Parents Sharing Books* program. Letters or flyers were sent home to seventh-grade parents. These went home with the students, but of course we knew that students this age have some trouble getting things like this home. We have public announcements on the TV cable station and Larry saw to it that PSB was announced on this. There was an article in the newspaper, and a news release was on the local radio station.

Sue: We felt our program was publicized in a variety of media for parents to hear about it somewhere, but I don't think we started publicizing it soon enough. I think posters around town are something we might want to explore next time in addition to letters, newspaper, TV, and radio. Another thing I think happened was that all of the Lilly projects we participated in were explained in a large newspaper article. I feel we need to have an exclusive article next time focusing just on PSB and invite parents to attend in this article. Having it be part of this larger article caused it to lose the emphasis we were hoping for.

Alanagh: We want to establish some kind of network so that parents can be calling parents about scheduled meetings. It takes one person a lot of time to call all these parents. In the past when I called parents, they would want to talk about PSB. It was wonderful hearing this kind of enthusiasm about the program, but it was taking me 30-45 minutes for one phone call. I couldn't get too many called if everyone talked this long! But I think parents calling parents can work. I also think a parent calling another parent who started the program, but isn't really doing a good job of participating, might go over better. Parents can give each other nudges.

Sue: Another thing we are leaning toward is having our PSB support group extend throughout the entire school year. Our first team was started in the Fall because of when we received our PSB

training. We had a very good group, and they really seemed to enjoy the support they received. We learned a lot with this first group and that helped us shape our PSB program for the 1992-93 school year.

That first group seemed to be disappointed when we finished our four PSB meetings. Several of the people in our first group commented at the end of the fourth meeting, "Oh, is it done already?" Of course we encouraged them to join the next group, but I think they appreciated the support they received from each other and were sorry to see it end. From these comments, we decided to start our PSB program at the beginning of each school year and have it last the entire year. We can encourage new parents to come into the group any time. I think the structure of the parent training and the information can easily be adapted to this. Alanagh and I have talked about this in great length, and I think we are going to try to hold at least six meetings during the school year. We won't schedule any meetings during December, because it is just too difficult during the holidays. We will start again in January, and hold meetings until the early part of May. I think this gives the parents the kind of support they seem to want.

Alanagh: We found that making seventh-grade parents aware of this program is a good idea. All parents are concerned about sending their children, especially their first one, to junior high. I think this is why our parents enjoyed the idea of a PSB support group. We talked about other concerns that parents and their children have about coming into a new environment. I think we'll probably include students more in our meetings. I think kids get the idea that when parents like our PSB group get together "they must be talking about us!"

Sue: If we do include students more in our meetings, we'll need some additional materials. Our meetings will have to be enjoyable for students and parents, or we'll lose them both. Every parent who has come has always said after each meeting how much they have enjoyed it. We don't want to lose that kind of enthusiasm.

Along these same lines, we are looking ahead to the next few years. Whenever it's possible or appropriate, I try to share with others in the building what is going on in PSB. We'd like other teachers to get involved so that we can have PSB leaders for each grade in this junior high. I'm an eighth grade teacher so I could easily offer PSB for parents at this level. We would need two other leader teams.

Once we introduce this program to seventh-grade parents, we want it available to them throughout their children's time here at the junior high. These seventh-grade parents are enthusiastic, and we would like to see this carry on to the other levels. I think the parents that we have now would like to continue next year. They enjoyed getting together, and you hate to lose that kind of feeling.

Alanagh: We tried to make our meetings move along, make everyone feel welcome, and Larry was good about seeing that some type of snack or refreshment was on hand. That got to be a running joke with one group. Larry would bring in candy bars and cokes that were available here at school. Parents joked about coming to the meetings just to get their candy bar and coke! But that was the kind of environment we had—everybody felt comfortable and had a good time.

I think the environment is so important for developing your PSB program. We held our meetings in the library where it was more relaxed—round tables and chairs rather than desks. Sue

and I took turns presenting information and kept it informal. Our meetings were more of a conversation rather than instruction. Refreshments loosen people up, too. I think our society sees that eating is a social activity, and it relaxes people. Being able to have something in their hands and handling something helped to put our group at ease. It gave them something to do with their hands.

Sue: One thing I am concerned with is parents choosing books. I have some real hesitancies about imposing my judgment of books on other people; namely the parents in our PSB group. There are books on the PSB bookshelf that I don't think are appropriate for parents and children sharing for the first time.

I'm watching parents pick out books and I'm hearing a lot of "Oh, this is a great classic. My child should be reading this." They are picking up books like *Johnny Tremain* because they [the parents] are interested in reading it. I'm having a hard time saying, "You should be choosing for your child's interests." When we talk about choosing books, I stress that parents should be choosing high-interest, exciting books to get the children started. This is the only way these kids will enjoy this experience. I'd like to go through and hand them [the parents] the books that their children will enjoy, but that can come off pretty pushy. I'm very concerned that parents are telling their kids: "Here, this is the book we are going to read." Parents need to understand that **children** should be choosing the books they read together in order to get this family reading going at home.

Kids read a lot of the classics in school, and I think this is important. But I want the PSB experience at home to be pure enjoyment. That might mean that parents have to read something that isn't a classic, or they don't particularly enjoy. If it gets children reading and interested in sharing with their parent, then it's the right book for this particular time.

Alanagh: Encouraging children to make the choices can be a motivating factor for parents to participate. Can you imagine what a parent would feel like if the child came up and said, "Here's a book I would like for us to read together." This would give me incentive to read with my child! Parents have to be willing to accept what the child wants to read—at least for the first book. When they get through the first book and see how much they enjoy sharing, then the parent and child can work out something for reading and sharing that everyone might enjoy.

I think this provides us with another reason why we need to have the kids at our meetings. We need the children there so they can be involved in the choice of the book instead of just the parents coming.

Sue: We have talked about the changes we want to make with our PSB program, and I think talking with the staff from the Family Literacy Center has helped us to improve our program. We need this kind of input from you. Sometimes you feel like, "Am I doing this the way I should be doing it?" Having those contacts and support inside and outside the school is very important. We feel that things are beginning to change, but we also realize that change is slow and some people won't ever change their attitudes.

Alanagh: Some of this reluctance to change is by choice. There are people in this community who have lived here all their life. Some of these people don't want change—they want things to stay the way they are.

Some teachers don't want to change. I know when I came into the library one day after school to check the card catalog to see what books the library had that were on our PSB bookshelf, I had several teachers ask me what I was doing. I was in the library for about 45 minutes, and that bothered three of them! They don't want parent involvement, because in the past it has often been negative involvement.

We still have a lot to do. Parent involvement hasn't been good in the past, and it is going to take some time for teachers in the building to accept parents coming in and to accept that parents can help in positive ways.

I can understand why we're not getting much teacher input about our *Parents Sharing Books* program. We've got a fired-up group of parents, and they're [teachers] just not real sure what that's going to do! But I'm excited about this program, and I want to keep it going. I think when teachers in this building see that we are involving parents in a positive way, they might see the benefits. We are willing to be patient!

Sue: Larry sees the benefits of parent involvement out-weighing any negative attitudes people might have. He's been at the elementary school level, and he's used to parents being in the school—it just doesn't worry him. He understands that it is going to take time. When you know someone like this who is supporting what you do, it is so encouraging as a leader and a teacher. It motivates you to work at making things like this program work.

Parent involvement has been discouraged in the past, and whenever a teacher had an idea he or she received a negative response. That was a real downer for me. We have staff in this building who have worked here for many, many years, and many of them will retire in the next five years or so. I think some change in staff might be good. I see things going in the right direction. I was aware of this program through my involvement with our other Lilly grant, and I encouraged Larry to participate in PSB.

Many of the parents who were involved in our PSB program already valued reading and education. But I think the significant thing that came out of these groups is that many of those parents admitted that communication had increased between them and their child. Some shared that they had stopped talking like they used to when the children were younger. We tend to think that this must come with this age group.

I think my own experiences as a mother and raising three teenagers has helped me understand what these parents are experiencing. You want your children to establish their independence, but we forget that independence doesn't mean that we stop making that effort to reach out to them.

I think if PSB parents were here today during this conversation many of them would emphasize the fact that PSB has helped to bring parent-child communication back into their homes. They saw it as more than a reading program—it's a program that enhanced family communication. It's been rewarding for me as a teacher to see kids get excited about reading in my classroom because of what is going on at home!

MCCULLOCH MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: McCulloch Middle School is a neighborhood school that is located in an older section of the town. It is just 4:30 when we arrive at McCulloch Middle School. The parking lot of the school is practically empty, and as we are entering this neighborhood school a lady is putting things into her car. I comment about the birthday balloon she is holding and she responds "Yes, some of the students gave me this for my birthday." We introduce ourselves, and she introduces herself as McCulloch's principal, Mrs. Whitticker. After giving us directions to get to the library, she finishes putting things in her car and takes us into the building. One hour later, she is on her way out again!

Mrs. Whitticker takes time to give us a tour of the building as we are making our way to the library. She explains how the building is arranged, how teachers work with the students at McCulloch, and how the faculty works together to provide the best possible learning experiences for the students. This one-hour, unplanned preview of McCulloch's principal gives us some insight as to why the school's PSB program is successful; they have principals that are supportive of their PSB program, and who are willing to give their time in helping the PSB leader implement a successful PSB program.

Artis Hoffman is the PSB leader at McCulloch, and she reinforces our assumptions about the support that administrators provide. She sees the support that her principals give her as a driving force for herself. She wants to succeed, because of the parents, students, and the administration that support her in these efforts. Artis points out characteristics of effective principals, and how those characteristics have helped Ardis to bring success to her PSB program.

Artis also points out during our interview that she receives personal reward from one particular parent and child in the group. Artis shares with us that another teacher suggested to her that a child and his mother be included in this program. The child is a student at McCulloch who has some learning difficulties and emotional problems. The child's mother is also burdened with emotional problems. Artis was very reluctant at first, but took the suggestion of the child's teacher, and invited this parent and child to the PSB meeting. Artis shares with us her story about the benefits this mother received from the PSB program. This experience, the support of others, and her commitment to "just do things better the next time around" are examples of why Artis looks forward to continuing her PSB program.

Artis Hoffman: I love my principals. I have very, very supportive principals, and that makes such a difference. Not only do they encourage parent involvement, but they encourage me to continue with it [PSB]. Anything that I ask for in the way of *Parents Sharing Books*, they try to get it for me or assist me in some way.

I think their strongest quality is that they listen to me and others in our building. We have a procedure that must be followed in our system. We [faculty] must go through the building level administration first and set up conferences or meetings to discuss our wants and desires. I haven't asked for that much, so I think when I do talk to them about things I would like to have and why I think it is important to have, they listen.

They recognize when someone is trying to do a good job, and they try to do their part in getting faculty needs met. Sometimes they can't get it done, but at least they hear me out and don't pick away at me before I even begin to explain what it is I want and why I want it. I just appreciate the fact that they listen to me.

Some teachers are very strong [teacher] union members. Our contracts read that we are not obligated to do anything outside of our classroom responsibilities. The contract says that we can give 30 minutes after school to extra-curricular duties. I spend more time than this for PSB, but I do it because I choose to do it. I'm sure if Jocelyn and Robin knew how much time I spent, they would try to do something; maybe some released time during the day to compensate for this. That's just the way they are. I don't ask for it, and in turn they give me such wonderful support. When they see us going out of our way for the kids in our school, they go out of their way to support what we are doing. It is a "give and take" situation here. They [principals] go out of their way to support those people who go out of their way for the kids in this school.

Our principals set the tone for this building [McCulloch]. They are caring, positive, and happy people. Mrs. Whitticker and Robin [assistant principal] have been very supportive of my *Parents Sharing Books* program. They certainly have gone out of their way in making me believe that it is a very worthwhile thing that I am doing. They have attended my meetings, and they are here for everything else that goes on in this school. This is a very positive parent involvement program, and Jocelyn [principal] wants anything positive...and who doesn't!

I think I am a very positive person, and I like being around people. I saw some opportunities for students, parents, and myself in doing this program [PSB]. I'm the librarian here, and I love to read. As a librarian, I try to get kids to love reading as much as I do. I saw *Parents Sharing Books* as an opportunity to share that love for reading with parents, too. Being the librarian sometimes doesn't allow me to get to know parents as well as if I were in the classroom teaching. It was an opportunity for me to get to know the students' parents and more of the students at McCulloch.

When the principals approached me about coming to Bloomington for this training, I was just coming back after being "RIF-ed." There are always those on the faculty who do everything, and I'm probably one of those people. I saw it as an opportunity to be a more valuable faculty member, and my efforts could benefit others in our school community.

We have a lot of kids with problems coming from homes that have a lot of problems. This is a rather depressed area. Our students come from middle- to low-income families. My parent group is made up of mothers, but I do have boys and girls in the program. We have a lot of children coming from single-parent homes in this school. Many of our children live with grandparents or an extended family. I don't think it matters whether it's a single parent or both parents or grandparents who are supporting the child. What I see happening is that the kids who are making it have "somebody" who cares. We have kids that need "somebody to care," and they need as many positive things in their life as we can offer them. I think the kids get a lot here [McCulloch]. We try to give our students the same kind of positive support that Jocelyn and Robin give us!

The church is a very important place for many of our students. I overheard two girls the other day talking. They both come from Black, single-parent homes, and they were talking about

the trip to Disney World they were going to take with their church group. These are the kind of groups our children need to belong to.

I'm planning a reading program next year called "Day of a Thousand Stars." I want to emphasize that reading is for everyone, and during that day we are having a lot of people in the community—politicians, professionals, people who provide services, basketball stars, and whoever is willing—read aloud in our school. I'm inviting a minister from one of the local churches. Her congregation is predominantly African-American. We talked about how important the church is to many of these students. I also think she will be an important person that day, because of her close ties with the church and her love of reading. I want to impress upon these children that reading is for everyone; all occupations require reading.

I've received a great deal of support from the president of our parent organization. I had her come to the first meeting. She came to every one of our meetings, and she has been very good at getting other parents involved. She knows so many people, because she's lived in the community for a long time. She's enthusiastic about the program [PSB], and that's helped me, too. I think that is one of the reasons for our diverse group of mothers. We have mothers from all backgrounds—professional to nonprofessional. This parent will be moving on to the high school with her children next year, but I think some of the mothers in our group will take on that leadership role. They are very good, and they have gotten their feet wet this year. These mothers like the program, and they don't want to see it die. I think when we start working together, we can get something going again for next year.

I sent out the usual newsletters to parents explaining the purpose of the program, but I think going to specific teachers to recruit students helped. I went to a couple of different teachers and asked if I could talk to their students about the [PSB] program. There was one thing that I asked the students to do, and that was to be committed. I first explained that I thought this program was worth my extra time, because I loved to read and I wanted others to see how much fun it is to share books. I tried to let them see my enthusiasm and commitment toward the program. Then I emphasized that I wanted kids and parents to do this program who wanted to do it and who would stick with it.

I recruited a diversity of mothers and students by doing it this way. I had some children bring parents to the first meeting, and then they dropped out. Some of the parents involved came because they love to read, and thought this would be a great way to get their family involved in reading again. Other parents didn't read at home, but their kids wanted to be involved in this. It's been great to see those parents become interested in reading.

I had a teacher from our building approach me about inviting one particular parent whose child she had in her classroom. This teacher works with children who have emotional problems. She thought this mother would be interested in this [PSB], and that it might benefit the child and the mother. I learned later that the family has a history of emotional problems. It never occurred to me to approach this type of classroom. But anyway, I sent the mother a note. She came and was so excited about this program. She brought her son, and it was so great to see him be a part of the group. The mother is very shy and didn't say much at our meetings, but you could tell that both of them got a lot out of our PSB program. I think she was made to feel very comfortable by the other parents, and for once her son belonged in a group that was positive for both of them.

She told me she loves to read the [PSB] books as much as he does and shared with me the books that she has enjoyed.

The great part is that just this little extra reward for her son has helped him in school. He has been in the emotionally handicapped program and is now being mainstreamed into some classes. Both of them have gotten so much positive feedback from being in the program [PSB]. This has been so rewarding for me to be part of this. Our group is small, but every one of them is enthusiastic about *Parents Sharing Books* and committed to seeing that it continues.

Another thing that PSB offers parents in this particular school is support. Our middle school starts at the 5th grade and goes through 8th grade. This is a big span, and I'm sure that parents who send their children to middle school are concerned about this. Some parents discussed this concern during our meetings. One parent commented that it was nice to share these worries with other parents. I think our parents benefitted from the support these meetings offered.

It has been difficult not having the other person in our PSB leader team. We had a parent come to the PSB training seminar, but it just didn't work out. She had a lot of family commitments this year. She came to our meetings, but she wasn't able to share the leader role. I wish I could have had a parent or another PSB leader in my building to work closely with this first year. It would have been nice to have another person to bounce ideas off, and to say after meetings, "Did that go okay?" or "What can I do differently?" I think I would have benefitted greatly from a co-leader's support.

Because I didn't have another trained PSB person's input or help, your [PSB] materials made my job a lot easier. It had everything that I needed as far as organizing the meetings and getting the publicity out. Everything that I needed was there, and I was very appreciative of the format that was provided. It was organized, easy to copy and handle, and I felt it provided information that would benefit my parents.

I'm excited about getting next year started. I have to do *Parents Sharing Books* again, because I want to look back and see how I have improved! I've learned a lot this year by doing the program, but I think I can do a better job next year!

JONES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: One thing that comes to mind when I think about Sidenia Moses is her determination to succeed. She makes the comment: "I know that I'm going to do PSB next year. For one thing, I know I can do a better job with it, and the other thing is that I know myself too well. I enjoy succeeding at things like this! I'm not a quitter and I don't like to fail at anything."

Mrs. Moses possesses the spirit to look at her PSB program at Jones Middle School objectively and see the obstacles that must be addressed before moving into another year with the program. She is very candid in describing to parents what she expects from them in helping to shape their *Parents Sharing Books* program at Jones Middle School, and she holds high expectations of herself as a PSB leader and an educator.

Her assertiveness and confidence in leading this PSB program provide Mrs. Moses with a vision for their PSB program when she comments "Eventually, I'd like to take a second seat in this program. I want to continue to be involved with our PSB program, but not as an instructor or authority figure. I recognized the ability of parents to train and motivate other parents at one of our meetings. I wasn't able to come at the start of one of our meetings, so Cathy [the parent PSB leader] and I arranged for her to continue with this PSB parent meeting. We planned together and organized the meeting, but Cathy presented the information. When I arrived at the meeting, I went to the back of the room and let Cathy continue with the parent presentation. The parents in our group responded well to this parent leadership. I can see this type of commitment and partnership from PSB leader teams growing into some strong ties for parent involvement at this school."

Mrs. Moses intends to take advantage of the opportunity to attend additional PSB training seminars. She sees this as a chance to involve more parents in the training process that will eventually pave the way for parents to commit themselves to PSB leadership roles. "We want to attend other PSB training seminars so that we can improve our program, but we also want parents to recognize their significance in strengthening not only our PSB program, but their role in promoting positive parent involvement."

Sidenia: Marion has always been known as a factory town because of Fisher Body and General Motors. I think Marion has an unusually diverse ethnic population for the size town it is. We have Asian-Americans, Hispanics, and African-Americans living in Marion. The factories, VA [Veterans' Administrations] Hospital, and our small Marion College contribute to this diversity.

The Marion Community School District is divided into three units. We have about 500 to 550 students at Jones Middle School. I think our middle school population represents a majority of blue-collar families with a very light sprinkling of professional families. Judging from this school district, I would say that a lot of our parents were not successful in school. If you weren't excited about school when you were there as a student, it's very unlikely that you're going to be excited about it when your child is in school. That's just how it works.

We had a former superintendent of the Marion Community School District that once made an excellent statement. Some years ago he made the comment that a child has three cornerstones in his life: one is the child's family; one is the child's church; and one is the child's school. In

today's society, many families do not attend church so the child no longer has the influence of the church. Many families are broken, whether by death, divorce, or simply by dysfunction, and so these children no longer have a family as a stable influence. So we are left with the school. The school is really that bright spot of the day for a lot of our kids; and therefore, we have assumed a lot of parental responsibility. That's not to say that schools can do a wonderful job of raising other people's children. The best person to raise a child is still the parent. We [the school] can take care of some needs, but we can't do it all. We need parents involved with their children for other reasons than athletics.

In this particular middle school, parents are attracted to Jones by athletics. You must understand that this [sports] is big in Marion. Athletics are a big draw in Marion (basketball is very big in Marion, Indiana)! Parents and grandparents are attracted by some programs that grade schools have initiated, and we have implemented them at our school. For example, there is a week that grandparents are invited to come and share lunch with their grandchildren at school. There is a week when parents are invited to do the same thing.

I think our principal recognizes the importance of parent involvement, and I feel that he was aware that this Lilly project was something we could benefit from without any expense to the school. He approached me about attending the PSB training on such short notice that we didn't have a parent leader in place at the time. It took me a while to find the parent leader that I wanted. I had to think about it for awhile, but I found a wonderful one! I asked Cathy Buck to be a part of the team. Cathy is an instructional assistant at Jones, and she has a sixth-grade daughter at Jones Middle School. It has been convenient having the three of us [principal, teacher, and parent leader] in the same building. It's been easy to get together, talk about our PSB program, and organize things for the meetings.

Even though Cathy didn't attend the PSB training with me, she was so good about going through the manual and learning about the program on her own. She would get all the materials ready that we needed for each meeting. I want Cathy to take a more active role next year with the group. She works well with parents, and I'd like to move to the background of PSB. I don't want to be seen as the authority figure in the group, but I do want to be involved in keeping the program going. Our middle school is fifth- through eighth grade. It's pretty easy to get parents of fifth-graders excited about these programs. They bring an elementary perspective with them when their children enter Jones; they want to be a part of the school and want to be involved with their children's school. We thought that parents would be more enthusiastic at this level, and have more of an interest in wanting their children to do well and get off on the right foot.

Having recognized this parent perspective, we worked through fifth-grade parents when initially implementing our *Parents Sharing Books* program. We sent flyers home with every fifth-grade child. I got six or seven responses from parents who sincerely wanted to be involved in this program. I wasn't thrilled with this turnout, but I can honestly say that those who volunteered for the PSB program were the best members of our group.

Our principal approached it a little differently. He was excited about this program and went to a fifth-grade parent meeting after our first PSB meeting. He did a PR job with these fifth-grade parents, and got about twelve more parents to sign up for this. Unfortunately, only one of those parents actively participated in our group. I'll take a volunteer any day over a recruit.

Those who volunteered without any pressure wanted to do this, and they were very good about attending all the meetings and working with their children.

I would never recommend recruiting parents. Our principal had good intentions, but pressure doesn't always guarantee sincerity and commitment. Some people put their name on a list or dotted line because it looks great when others see the list. This is a pretty strong word, but things like that disgust me. I wanted more parents to respond to my flyer, but I have only good thoughts about the six or seven that did respond. It was easy showing up for a PSB meeting when I knew this small group of parents wanted to be here.

I took it upon myself to contact these ten or twelve parents who signed up to do this program before every meeting. I hope I made a couple of points by making these phone calls. First of all, I wanted them to know that I saw their name on this list, I wanted them to be a part of the group, and I assumed they also wanted to be part of this group because they signed their name to this list. Secondly, I hoped they thought about this idea of just signing your name to any list. I have a sense of humor anyway and I kind of made my point in that light. I kept calling these parents on this list and they kept telling me how busy they were with other activities. And I just said to every one of them: "I know that you do a lot with your children. I know that you are involved in a lot of activities. And I know that you and your husband are very busy. And I know that you come to all the athletics activities at school." But I also added: "But for heaven's sake, when I saw your name on the list, I really expected you to be there or why else would you have signed up!" I said all this with a laugh and a good sense of humor, but I hope that the next time they sign up to do something that they think about this. I don't want lists of parents. I want parents that have a sense of commitment and sincerity when they sign their name to something. I'm looking forward to next year to see if some of these parents show up! I'm not going to let them off the hook; I'll just start calling them again!

I really believe our [PSB] group will increase in size next year. Cathy and I are already talking about what we are going to do next year to promote the program. We want to be very up front with the parents. We are going to compose a flyer that explains exactly what PSB is, how parents and kids can benefit, and the responsibilities of parents once they commit themselves to participating in PSB. We are going to have PSB meeting times already arranged on this brochure so that parents are aware of just how much time this is going to take. When parents sign on the "dotted line" next year, they are going to know what they are getting into, how they can benefit, and they are going to know that we want their participation and commitment. We want them to know that we take our leader roles seriously and that we expect this same type of commitment from them. We intend for this brochure to be a form of recruitment, but we want parents to understand that "signing up" and responding as volunteers show us they are serious about being part of our PSB group. We want active participation, not fluffy signatures.

Our group was relatively small, but the parents were so positive about the PSB program. I think they are going to be our best form of getting more parents involved in the program. What I like about this group is that it has parents who volunteered to do this program for a diversity of reasons. We have a wide range of readers. We have some excellent students who are in the program, and we have some students who are learning disabled that are participating in the program.

We have some problems that will have to be worked out before we start another PSB group. Our main concern is "who should attend" our meetings. When we started our initial PSB group and meetings, the parents insisted that the children come. We allowed that because it was so important to them. We didn't plan any extra activities for them [students]; they were just part of our PSB group. My parent leader and I began to notice that it was very difficult to discuss certain issues with the parents as long as the children were present. Perhaps parents are hesitant to discuss the subject matter of some of the books in front of other people's children. I also think that having the children at our meetings increased parents' reluctance to discuss reading problems their children might be having or problems they were having in getting their children to read at home. I admire parents for respecting the feelings of others in the group, but part of this program is sharing. If children's presence inhibits this sharing, then we have to work something out before starting another group.

Cathy and I feel that the quality of sharing might be better without children present. For this reason, we'll be looking for ways to have only parents at our meetings. We may have to let children be part of the PSB group, but plan separate activities for them. I see us having the children meet in a different room so that parents are able to speak freely at these meetings. We haven't quite figured this out, but we want parents to be comfortable sharing their concerns with other members of the group. The support we want our *Parents Sharing Books* program to offer parents extends from this practice of sharing concerns and problems with other members of the group. This idea of "sharing" is twofold; parents benefit by sharing with other parents and then they see the significance of sharing with their children.

Cathy and I are both aware that parents' time is valuable. Many of them work and find it difficult to become involved in other things. We sometimes forget that working parents hold two full-time jobs; one outside the home and one inside the home. When parents get home from work, they start their other full-time job as a parent.

Parents are appreciative of our short meetings. We discussed with them about having refreshments, but they just wanted to come to the meetings, and be able to leave at a reasonable time. We meet at 6:30, and we are usually finished by 7:30. Many of our parents like this arrangement. They comment that when PSB meetings finish by 7:30 they are still able to attend other meetings or they are able to keep another commitment. They don't feel that PSB is tying them down or that they are losing an entire evening. Parents are willing to give us some of their time if we respect their time.

During our meetings, several of our parents commented about today's adolescent literature. These books deal with a lot of problems that our society is trying to deal with, and I think this was shocking for some parents. I think this awareness was a positive experience for them, and it helped them to realize that books like these can be used to talk with their child about concerns and problems that children and families face today.

I think the positive experiences I am having with our volunteer parents are very rewarding for me as a leader. One of our parents is a teacher at a Marion elementary school, and she was extremely helpful. I mentioned to her after a meeting that the books in our PSB Bookshelf wouldn't be at the reading level of these few students with reading difficulties. This teacher/parent just took it upon herself to bring fifteen to twenty books to the next meeting that would be suitable for these children. She had these three or four boys as students before they came to our

middle school, and she was familiar with the reading levels they would be able to handle. They were able to enjoy the books, and that increased our supply of books by at least twenty. This parent didn't have to do this, but she took the time to look out for somebody else in the group.

One of the other huge joys of our small group was the fathers who participated in PSB. We had two fathers participate in PSB with their daughters. As leaders, I think we find that it is easy to get mothers to say that they will do this with their children, but it's rather uncommon to have fathers sign up.

One of our male teachers on our faculty wanted to do this with his daughter who is not a student at this school. His daughter is only a fourth grader, but loves to read. He found out that PSB was offered in our school, and he didn't want to wait until his daughter got to the middle school to do it.

We had another gentleman who was one of the "recruited" parents who was a very good participant. He came every single meeting, and I know they must have read several books during this time. He was such an asset to our group. He also did this with his daughter. This father worked nights from 3:00 to midnight, and he scheduled his dinner time at work so that he could attend the PSB meetings. I think this kind of parent commitment is remarkable, and I feel that his enthusiasm and sense of obligation impressed a lot of the other parents in our group.

He was such a positive influence in our group. This father had wonderful ideas, and he had wonderful insight into the books that he read with his daughter. He was so open. We tend to think that men and fathers are not very open with their feelings, but he was such an inspiration for the group. What an example he set for other parents, and he didn't use the excuse "My work schedule won't allow me to do this." Here's a father whose schedule is very different from most people's, and he demonstrated to everybody else that you can find time. He wasn't afraid to ask questions. He was so interested in learning more about sharing with his daughter. And he was so appreciative of any sharing techniques we discussed at our meetings. Can you imagine how that child must feel about this experience! She has to know and feel important when her father rearranges his schedule like this so he can share this parent activity with her!

At the end of our formal meetings, this father shared with the group that he felt this [PSB experience] had been the single most important way that he had to know his daughter. He felt that discussing these books with his daughter had helped him to understand and attend to his eleven-year-old daughter. He realized that she was growing up, and he was concerned about her different thoughts as she grows older. This father shared that he and his daughter have a good relationship, but he was "looking ahead." He wanted to make sure that his daughter didn't stop communicating with him. He said that they enjoyed *Parents Sharing Books*, and had fun with the books. In fact, they included the mother and a brother who was younger than the fifth-grade daughter. The entire family had a good time with *Parents Sharing Books*.

We had one couple who wanted to participate in the program, but times and schedules just didn't work out for them. She is a mother with two children, and she has a new husband who is now the stepfather for her children. She has such a willingness to form this new family, and felt that this program would bring them together as a family and help to form a close family unit. She's one that we will want to contact next year to be in our group.

When you are part of a group that shares these types of rewards and benefits, it's not hard to think about doing this program again. Stories like these are just one of the reasons for continuing with PSB. Cathy and I will do PSB again because I think we can get more parents like this involved. I'm a perfectionist, and I want to do PSB next year because I think I can do an even better job with it. I don't like to fail. I know myself well enough to know that I enjoy successes like this. I'm not a quitter and I don't like to fail—at anything!

You'll hear from me next year; in fact, I'm going to sign up for another PSB seminar in the fall. I think that since I've been through it once, I can benefit by attending another training seminar and I want Cathy [parent leader] to be involved in this training.

APPENDIX K: Adaptability of PSB

The stories that follow provide the reader with unique pictures of PSB programs. 'Adaptability' is a theme that readers should notice in these participants' stories. These leaders possessed the ability to take the information and concepts of the *Parents Sharing Books* program and adapt it to their community's needs. They understood the needs of parents in their community and adjusted their approaches to parent involvment so that parents' needs were met. They talked about how they were able to take full advantage of the program's adaptability; they also implied that a practical approach to PSB was necessary. This approach helped some leaders to integrate classroom activities and other programs they were involved with, and thus make these activities and programs work together so that they had a dynamic impact on parent involvement in their school.

We believe these PSB teams demonstrated qualities that set examples for other educators; they possessed an overabundance of enthusiasm, commitment, and determination. They understood that the challenges ahead of them were not easy ones, but they felt that the efforts they made toward implementing successful *Parents Sharing Books* programs in their school were worthwhile. They addressed the challenges of implementing *Parents Sharing Books* in their schools with the attitude: "There is always something else we can try when one thing doesn't work out."

TOLLESTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Mrs. Lovelace teaches reading at Tolleston Middle School in Gary, Indiana. As I walk into Patricia Lovelace's classroom, the first thing I notice is the sign under her clock. The sign reads, "Time to Learn." Mrs. Lovelace comments about the sign, "I put it there for a reason; every time children look at the clock they see that it is time to learn. Anywhere we are or whatever time it is, it is always a time to learn something."

Mrs. Lovelace is a sharp lady who is on a "mission!" Her mission is to convince students and parents that reading is important. She knows a lot about parent involvement, and parents in her school respond to her outgoing and caring approach. Mrs. Lovelace makes personal contacts with her parents by calling them on the phone and inviting them to parent meetings. When the parents arrive for meetings, Mrs. Lovelace takes the time to meet individually with all the parents and talk with them about their children and the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Parents who talk about her PSB program say it is the personal contact she has with them that makes the program work.

Patricia is aware that many parents tell their kids to read, but they don't read and share books with their own children. Mrs. Lovelace recognizes that this is an important time for reading, and that it is important that teachers and parents get books into these adolescent children's homes. "I'm not sure students and parents realize how important reading is, so what I do is try to make reading in the classroom as practical as it is for children and parents outside of the classroom."

When Mrs. Lovelace personally contacts each parent, not only does she encourage parents to get reading materials into the home, but she emphasizes to parents that they can't stand back and watch their children read. She encourages parents to be participants in reading and sharing books with their children at home, and actively involve themselves in pointing out to their children that reading is everywhere in their lives; newspapers, magazines, road signs, billboards, advertisements, directions for completing forms, and other types of environmental print.

In addition to emphasizing the practical purposes of reading, Mrs. Lovelace emphasizes the fact that books can be used to open the lines of communication between parents and children. She piques parents' curiosity by suggesting that they might learn something about themselves or their children by reading and sharing books with their children!

Her practical beliefs about teaching children and reaching parents have helped her implement a successful *Parents Sharing Books* program. She believes that teachers must let students know that reading isn't something you stop doing when you leave the classroom. "The nicest thing my students can say after they leave here is, 'I'm still reading.'"

The excitement, commitment, and respect that mold Patricia Lovelace's *Parents Sharing Books* program is apparent in her voice, and is echoed in the voices of her parents. It is clear to see why one parent who participates in PSB comments, "You've got the right person for this job [PSB leader]. Mrs. Lovelace is superb!

Mrs. Lovelace: I've been teaching children for quite a long time. I started teaching in 1956, and I worked at the elementary levels for the first 17 years. The rest of the time, I've been in junior high. When I was at the elementary level, I thought that was just the greatest! Then when I went to junior high I found out I liked junior high, and now I think it is the greatest!

These [students] are special people at the junior high level, and it's a difficult age. But these children are interesting. There's never a dull moment. There are days when I think I could hang it up, but then I come right back the next day!

I think I'm probably partial to boys. I have two boys of my own, and I understand that there can be real problems at this point in time with young Black men. I say that boys need help at this time, but all children go through this difficult stage. They need to be helped to realize their best and to achieve something in their life. If we can get them here [school] and get them on the right path, they can do something with their lives. It's a good time for this program [PSB]. That's why I decided to do this program; it's an important time for my students, and I'm willing to give them and their parents my time. If I can help or reach them, I'll do anything I can to get them to read. The nicest thing my students can say after they leave here is, "I'm still reading."

I'm not sure students and parents realize how important reading is, so what I do is try to make reading in the classroom as practical as it is for children and parents outside of the classroom. Sometimes we do things with the newspaper, not just books. They can check out newspapers and magazines along with books. We look for information in the newspaper that is applicable to parents and children: like looking for an apartment, buying a new or used car, checking the sales that are going on at the grocery stores, or looking for work. I emphasize to parents and children that you cannot do these things if you cannot read, and that every adult should read. You need to read so that you can be an informed citizen. We talk about a lot of things that are not just reading skills, we talk about reading for life. It's not just reading in my classroom and that's why that sign hangs under my clock. I want parents and children to understand that learning takes place as much outside my classroom as it does in my classroom. And this is how I approach the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Parents must continue to help their children learn outside my classroom.

I want to be flexible about running my PSB program. I make it convenient for the parents. The meeting times change. I hold some meetings at 3:30 so that parents don't have to return that evening for a meeting. I also let parents know that I want them to come in when it is convenient for them. Some parents can't attend things in the evening, but they are very willing to stop by the school and pick out a book. What's nice about that is I can talk to them one-on-one. Because I have their children in my class, I can recommend books and help them pick out books their children might be interested in reading. Many of the students bring the books back and make their book choices on their own.

I think this idea that *Parents Sharing Books* has is good for my children. The parents in PSB are my children's parents; they are "my" children, too! I see their interest in reading improving. I see these children every day, and I can see an improvement in their attitudes because of what is going on in the classroom and outside my classroom. It's easy to keep track of how they are doing. I can keep encouraging them to choose more books when they get one finished. I have one child that stays with his grandfather, and he said, "I finished the books, but he's

[grandfather] not finished yet. He's gonna have to get on the ball." I had to laugh, because that's what I tell my students!

I also like that the children aren't expected to sign their book out, but are expected to bring it back on the honor system. I have one rule; bring it back so someone else can enjoy it, too. It's a good experience; it lets my kids know that somebody believes in them enough to let them take it home and someone knows that they will bring it back for others to use. Some of these children don't have reading materials in their home, and I think it is very important that we get books into their home. PSB has made it easy. It's easier to get a book from my PSB shelf than it is to go to the public library, and for some, it is easier than using the school library. I let them browse while they are in my class, and I think it helps to have the books in sight.

Every year when I start my program, I call all my students' parents. I did something a little different this time. I told them I would like to talk to them about their children's progress in my classroom, and that I had a parent involvement program they might be interested in doing. The fact that someone wanted to talk to them personally about their children's progress was the key. Every parent wants to know how his or her child is doing in school.

When the parents arrived, I talked individually with them, and then briefly told them about the *Parents Sharing Books* program in our school. I didn't make it sound hard. I told them if they would read with their children every night, they would be helping their children in school. Some parents don't think they have to read to their children once they get older. I emphasized the fact that these books can be used to open the lines of communication between parents and children. We also forget that parents don't see books in the same way as we [teachers] do. Many of them tell their kids to read, but don't read and share books with them. They don't think that maybe there is something for them in their children's books.

I also explain how reading is in everyday things we do: looking up phone numbers, driving in the car and reading signs, reading the newspaper, and all sorts of things. Some parents don't think of these things as reading, but once all these things are explained to parents, they have a great outlook on this program [PSB].

I think about taking PSB to the PTA group and letting them know about it, but at this point I feel I must start at "home" and make it successful here first. I like the closeness of the parent groups, and I think we would lose this if I take it to the PTA. I think it's the personal contact that I make with parents that makes my program work. They like being called for something positive, and enjoy being singled out to talk only about their child. I'm tired of hearing "we don't have time." It does take time, but I always have time when it comes to my kids—especially if it can help my kids.

CRESTON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Overview: Deborah Bova teaches 7th grade at Creston Junior High School in Indianapolis. Creston is a township school whose enrollment is made up of students living in the area and those who are bussed from other districts within the IPS (Indianapolis Public Schools) system. Mrs. Bova is the reading and language arts person on a team of teachers who plan their classroom activities together and work to integrate the learning experiences for their group of students.

Mrs. Bova has created a comfortable but stimulating learning environment. A rocking chair catches my eye as I enter Deborah's 7th grade classroom. Students' desks are not in straight rows and somewhere over in a corner barely detected is a teacher's desk surrounded by paperback books. Racks and shelves of books litter this environment. A portable book rack sits among the groups of student desks. As Mrs. Bova gestures toward it she says, "I bought the one with rollers. It is great! We can just move it around the room wherever kids need it. It has two sides and six shelves, and look, it's almost completely full! We've got the books, and I give them the opportunity to read. If the materials and the time are available, they'll read. Having PSB books available for parents is essential."

Deborah Bova knows about the books that adolescents read. She has read most of them, and this makes Deborah a positive role model for students and parents. Knowing about the books that she is encouraging others to read is how she is able to "sell" books to her students and parents involved in PSB. Mrs. Bova talks to parents about adolescent books in the same way she talks to her students about books they can choose to read in her class. "I always try to share something about the book that I think will draw the reader in and get them excited about reading a particular book. I share my personal reactions to the book and how it affected me or what I was able to relate to in the book." As Deborah talks about some of the books kids in her classroom read and books that parents have read in PSB, you begin to understand how she turns parents and children on to reading. Her enthusiasm for reading is contagious! I left Deborah that afternoon wanting to read all the books she had talked about!

Deborah Bova's PSB program is as unique and dynamic as its leader! This is one determined person with a mission—getting kids and parents to read! When Mrs. Bova held her first PSB meeting in the school's library, she was disappointed with the turnout. "Only 15 parents came that night. I wanted more and I think the library did it. Too stiff. So we moved to Laughner's cafeteria. Now I've got a group of thirty parents!"

While some teachers are nervous about leaving controversial books on their PSB bookshelves, Deborah is adding to her collection. She pushes parents to read the "shocking" books and hopes that such exposure can help parents be better parents. She feels that encouraging parents to read their child's books makes them more aware of what their kids are up against. "Things have changed and these books can help parents understand this transition that society is making. I don't force parents to read adolescent books about sex, drugs, gangs, and whatever. But I encourage them to find out what kind of things their child is up against. I don't think we make things better by running or hiding from things like this. I think we make things better by making people more aware of situations and how others have handled problems. Some of these adolescent literature stories are lessons on parenting. The people that are writing these books had to, in some way, experience these situations. These are educated people who have a story to share

and want to help others learn from their mistakes or experiences. I see children's literature as a tool in helping parents parent. *Parents Sharing Books* is like a therapy for some of my parents. They come and share the books they are reading and then they share their own concerns and fears about their children approaching adolescence."

Deborah Bova's PSB program complements what she is doing in her classroom. She has integrated her PSB program with students' classroom reading and writing. Deborah uses incentives to encourage parents to read with their children at home and to respond to the reading in their children's dialogue journal. Parents who are unable to attend PSB meetings keep in touch with Mrs. Bova by using the dialogue journal. Mrs. Bova responds to parents' comments, and reminds them of upcoming PSB meetings. "I don't see parents who live in the [housing] projects at my PSB meetings, but I'm in contact with them through their child's dialogue journal. Transportation may inhibit them from attending PSB, but we have found a way to work around this. Their child can still earn bonus points for having a parent participate in PSB—we just use the dialogue journal to encourage this type of PSB participation. I've got a diversity of backgrounds to deal with here, and we can make PSB work to fit the needs of parents in our school community."

Mrs. Bova: The *Parents Sharing Books* program that we have does two things. First of all, it gets the parents together with the kids reading. But for us at Creston, it also gets the parents involved in school in a friendly, comfortable way. I promote the program from a social aspect; playing up the communication aspects of the program. Parents are more threatened when you want them to become involved in a "reading" program.

Often, at the beginning of the year, there are a lot of questions about going into the seventh grade; questions about what is expected of students coming into junior high. Parents and students have anxieties about coming into seventh grade, and this particular feeling of anxiety is dealt with in our PSB meetings. We talk about this junior high experience with parents, and we talk about ways that parents can focus on helping their children. We emphasize that our PSB program can help parents and children work through these anxieties and other concerns they have as adolescents and parents.

We try to stress that the reading should take place in a comfortable area; an environment where there isn't a lot of stress. It's not an atmosphere where you have to do a worksheet or book report, and it's not an atmosphere where parents are drilling their children with questions that require right answers. It's an environment that parents create so that the children feel they have something in common with their parents during this stage of development, and it isn't threatening to children or parents.

I actually present our PSB program as an activity for parents to learn more about the junior high school experience, and use the book sharing experience as an avenue for keeping a handle on things during their children's junior high experience. Quite often I get parents initially because they are a bit concerned about the seventh grade. And then they get hooked on the idea of reading with their children to keep those lines of communication open.

I introduce the *Parents Sharing Books* program at our orientation night for seventh-grade parents. The parents know about PSB before their children ever come to Creston. I give a brief overview of the program and alert parents that they should look for flyers during the first six

weeks of school that tell them about the calendar of PSB meetings; when and where we will meet for PSB parent meetings. I also tell parents that I put an announcement about PSB meetings on our homework hotline.

We have our PSB meetings at Laughner's cafeteria. I want to create a comfortable feeling about PSB, and I want a positive attitude to surface about my parent gatherings. I think taking the parents to another location helps to create this relaxed, positive atmosphere. We meet around 6:30, and parents are free to eat dinner or have dessert or just have a cup of coffee during our PSB meetings. Laughner's have been very good about not pressuring us to buy food, and they are very good about letting us have a section of the dining area to meet. I think the support that Laughner's gives us is great!

Two weeks before the first grade card goes out, I tell the kids about *Parents Sharing Books* and the seventh-grade parents receive a notice of our first PSB meeting. I only have a smattering of kids that get A's the first six-week grading period because they are just unnerved by my program. So about two weeks before these grades go out I say to my kids, "Now understand that there are probably only going to be about five A's out of one hundred forty kids in this class. Now if your parents come to *Parents Sharing Books*, I will give you bonus points. I will give you twenty bonus points for the first parent and an additional fifteen points for the second parent." I've even given extra points for a grandmother that tagged along! But that's how I start my kids out with PSB. I remind them throughout the school year and just before each grading period about PSB. Each reminder I give, I emphasize the importance of reading at home, reading for pleasure, and reading as a family. Offering the bonus points supports my feelings about this family reading and how essential I think it is for parents to support their children. I hope parents and children understand that the bonus points come because I value reading; we have blocks of time in class that we just read and I want this attitude carried over at home. I can promote reading at home by offering this extra incentive.

I have children reading at home with their parents, but these parents are just not able to attend our meetings. We use dialogue journals in my class and we have blocks of time in class that we just write. I also encourage this activity to carry over to the child's home. I encourage students to involve their parents in this dialogue journal activity. When students include their parents in this journal writing, then we have a three-way response journal going—teacher, student, and parent. We write back and forth to each other. I offer five points for each entry the parent makes in his or her child's dialogue journal. I have parents who have never been to our *Parents Sharing Books* meetings, but we are writing back and forth in this dialogue journal. I write them notes about the reading they are doing at home together, and I always invite them to our PSB meetings. I've included notes about helping them find a ride to the meeting if they would like to come.

I've tried to adapt our PSB program to fit the needs of our parents, and yet support the environment that is in my classroom. I fashion my classroom around the same beliefs as Nancie Atwell's book *In the Middle*. Reading books and writing about books should be like sitting around the dining room table and having a conversation about a book. That's the sense that I want parents to have when they do PSB with their children.

We started out in the library at school with our first PSB meeting. It was stuffy, strict, and instructional. We stuck them in a big room, stuck me at the front of the room, and it became a classroom lecture.

After that experience, I took our PSB program to Laughner's. I want to present a different message, so I present the material just like I would with my kids in class. I give the parents mini-lessons. I hold up a book at each meeting and begin to talk a little bit about it. I tell them that Taffy Sinclair is a real brat in such and such a book! The books I talk about can be very controversial, but once we begin to talk about the books then parents begin to share their concerns and fears for their child at this age and time. Parents begin to bring books in they have read with their children and share with other parents.

They talk about the experiences of these characters and oftentimes they talk about situations in the books that reflect the situations of their own children. By the end of the year, we have parents realizing through adolescent fiction and biography more of what their kids are up against. They come away with a real view of what it is to be an adolescent today. Because many of them have never taken the opportunity to read adolescent literature as an adult, they don't understand how things have changed.

I try to make parents comfortable with some of these books by explaining that it is probably better for their children to experience things in literature rather than in real life. If they are curious about gangs, drugs, rebellion, or sex, it's in adolescent literature and it's far better to have them read about it in a book than to have their children go through a similar situation in real life.

I don't have any books that I feel are damaging, but we don't read the *Bobbsey Twins* either. Enlightening, yes, but not damaging. I think many of the books on our PSB Bookshelf and others I have added to our collection introduce an element that can help our children get help through school. These books describe situations that adolescents must confront.

Some parents and adults might argue this point, but the parents in our PSB group generally say that they realize their kids are up against situations that they didn't believe existed before. They realize their kids are growing up, and that they are not the little kids they were before. Parents realize that if they show their shock about things that their kids say to them, the kids won't share things with them any more!

We talked about some shocking situations in books that we were reading in our group. I recommended to parents the book *Ritchie*. It's a biography of a father and son in the early 70's. When the son is young, he and his father have this wonderful relationship. The son becomes involved with drugs as an adolescent, and the father and son ultimately clash. The father accidentally kills his own son in an argument over a gun. At the end of the story, the father deals with being tried before a grand jury. The father receives letters from all over the country from executives to blue-collar workers who experienced the same ordeals with drugs and other family tragedies. Parents were reaching out to other parents in this book and sharing their own personal experiences with their own children.

I use this book to emphasize the importance of parents keeping in touch with their children; keeping those lines of communication open so that children can continue to share their problems, conflicts, and fears with them.

I shared this same book with my daughter. We were kind of at odds with each other at the time. By sharing a book like this, we could both see the boy's point of view, the father's, the mother's, and the brother's point of view. My daughter and I could identify with every character in this particular biography. I think that parents need to understand, and I make this point at our meetings, that things can honestly get horrible with kids when they reach a certain age. And parents need information, materials, instruction, and whatever to get them through these times. One parent commented that "the books make some bad situations come out okay. There may be consequences to confront, but things do work out." Parents in our group come together as much for themselves as they do for their children. It's been almost a therapy for some of these parents.

When we talked about the book *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, parents shared their fear of drugs and that their children might be involved with drugs. They talked about their fear of community judgment, and their concern not only for their children, but themselves and how they would have to handle these problems. As a teacher and a PSB leader, I need to be honest with these parents. I don't think you have to bare your soul, but you can share with parents that they aren't alone. I think it's okay to say to parents that not one of us has "perfect" children or "I understand what you are going through; I've been there, too." It's not a time for me to be an expert and an authority figure. It's a time for parents and teachers to recognize our common interests—kids, their children, my students.

I think the one lesson that I learned about my own children, and it's become a message that I try to pass on to parents, is that it's very easy to love your children when they are doing everything right. When they do something wrong and they embarrass you or shame you (taking the pride that you had for them and turning it inward), it's very difficult to love your children. But it is at this point or time that they need you more than they ever needed you when they were in the "top 10" or had straight A's or whatever. Today's literature helps parents put their anger into perspective. It's not that a parent hates his or her child when things go wrong; it's anger about the child's lack of success.

Parents worry that their children aren't reading on a variety of topics. I tell my kids and parents that I go on reading "drunks", too. I'll read Pilcher till I can't read her anymore, and then I'll get hooked on some other author. I explain to parents that I read things depending on what my needs are at the time. Kids are the same way. I emphasize to the parents that we have lots and lots of books for kids about going into middle school, and that their children can get a taste of everything. Parents can get a taste of everything!

Some of the worst kids that I have ever had have become some of my finest independent readers—given the right materials. I think that it is essential for every teacher and PSB leader that's involved with reading classes and PSB to read as many as possible of the books that are on the PSB Bookshelf, and to read everything that kids seem to like. Leaders might try to read certain authors, too, and then try to find books that can support kids during their stages of development.

I encourage every one of the parents to read *The Goats* by Cole. After reading the book, parents talk about personal experiences that might relate to this book, and how sometimes their children have been the victims of humiliating tricks or maybe their children have been the ones to deal it out. This age group is an exciting one for me to be involved with, but the reality is that kids at this age can be darn cruel, too. This kind of abusive ridicule is still going strong in the 90's and we [parent group] talk about how we can help our kids deal with it.

I recommend that parents read my "gang" books as I refer to them—*Ace Hits Big Time, Motown and DeeDee*, and *Scorpions*. Parents read these books and I tell them "some of our students at Creston experience living with this." The kids in the [housing] projects can relate to these books, while some parents can only read about these situations and try to understand what it is like for some of their children's peers.

We don't have the students come to our PSB meetings. I think our parents would be less open if we had the kids there. I know one of our parents who comes to our meetings was really upset with her daughter. She has shared so much with the group about her frustrations with parenting. This parent commented one meeting that our PSB support group has helped her deal with these parenting situations. Just listening to others talk about how they handle things has helped her, and others in the group were able to support some decisions that this parent had made. She said that she has learned to ignore certain things on the outside, and not react until she feels it is time to step in and react to her daughter's behavior. She said things are better between her and the daughter. I don't think parents would be so open if children were present at our meetings. I think the meetings are more fulfilling for parents when they have the freedom to talk with other parents.

Indirectly, the students are involved in our PSB program by what we do in the classroom. Jed is a student in my class and his mother joined our PSB group. Jed is a very bright boy, but his mother said he just didn't read very much. He and his mother got into Susan Cooper's books. They have read them all and then got into Walter Myers' books. Jed reads things like *Hatchet* and *Banner in the Sky* now. We do book skits and reading presentations in class, and Jed presented some of the materials he had been reading through PSB to the class. He told how he and his mother got started on these books and that his mother had picked out a Susan Cooper book to share with him at home. Now more kids are reading these same books. Jed has been the force that motivates some of the kids to read similar books, and some are even reading them with their parents.

I also have a board where kids post book ratings and make comments about their book for other kids to notice. Kids put books up they have read in class and books they have shared with their parents. Kids use this board a lot when they aren't sure what book they want to read next. These same activities carry back and forth between the classroom, home, and our PSB program. It all works together.

We have a cross-section of parents and students participating in our program. We have a physician, a mother who just learned to read this year (she came to get more help), a father who works for Channel 8 TV, a mother who is working on her teaching license, another mother who is a dental hygienist, and just a variety of backgrounds. One family who participated in the program came to help join their two families together. The husband and wife had just recently been married and they thought this would be a good way to bring the two families together. Then

I also had a family that recently divorced, but the mother and father still came for their son—both of them shared reading with him. I have a lot of middle-class families who participate in the PSB meetings, and I also have families from the [housing] projects who are participating in PSB, but I've never seen them. They are the ones who are using the dialogue journals, and we write back and forth.

We had one mother who came to all our meetings on a regular basis. She's the one getting her teaching license, and they have just gone through a divorce. Her son wrote a suicide note as a writing project for my class! I was at home going through these papers, and he had attached it to a writing conference sheet. He had done all the formal things for the editing process—he even said how many minutes he spent revising and self-editing this piece of writing. I was reading along and then came to the suicide note! I knew I had to do something about this right away! I called our school psychologist, and she told me that she had gotten an anonymous phone call from a parent that same day about this child. He had been cutting himself with a razor blade. We got this child some help. His mother shared with us later that our *Parents Sharing Books* program really helped her. She was new to the community, and just getting together with parents who could understand what her child was going through helped. She told me that she just felt that our program had put her in touch with materials and things that would not have been available to her. With her husband deserting the family and being a mother to two kids and trying to go to school full-time and working and who knows what else, PSB was one of the few things that she did during the month that really helped—she did PSB for herself. At our last PSB meeting she said to me, "I just really want you to know I appreciate everything that the school has done and the way that I've been able to make friends. These meetings have helped me know more parents."

Because of this experience, we have talked in our group about networking and getting some other parents involved—reaching out and inviting parents that haven't come. We have encouraged them not to feel awkward because they haven't come before, or maybe have come to one meeting and then haven't been back in a long time. We don't want anyone staying away just because they think they don't read well or don't read at all.

One thing we are going to try to do for our next meeting is get the parents from my group to invite parents of students from the other team of teachers. We are also thinking about calling parents who are involved at the elementary now, but will be having children in the junior high next fall. I want to get other teachers from the other blocks or teams to get a PSB group going. This attempt would put PSB across the 7th grade rather than in just one strand as it is now. There's no reason why we couldn't all meet at Laughner's and then break up into small groups. Each block teacher could lead a small discussion group.

We have a PSB leader for the eighth grade, because some of the parents who had such a positive experience the year before wanted it in the eighth grade. I don't know how it is going. I'd like to recruit my seventh grade parents and have them work with an eighth grade teacher to keep it going. It's [PSB] important enough that once we have it off the ground, it shouldn't stop. Too many adults and children are benefitting from it [PSB].

It's not just kids that are benefitting from this program. I mentioned that we have a parent who told me that she didn't read very well. I encouraged her to stay in the group because I told her: "The way a person learns to read is by reading." With her being so honest with me, I could

help her. I helped her select books I thought she could read and that would hold her interest. She has come to every meeting and she said, "I just can't get over how I like these [books]. I'm able to read them." She started out with books that were probably at a fourth grade level. I'd say she's up to about 6th or 7th grade at this point. That's a wonderful accomplishment. She can read just about anything at this point that I have on our PSB Bookshelf. Her daughter is really pleased with her mother, too. Her daughter said to me, "You know my mom reads more books. She's read more books than she's ever read. I just think that's great!"

I keep telling parents and kids that reading is just like a sport—the more you practice the better you get. Whatever these kids and parents take from the classroom and PSB in the way of reading and writing, they will never lose it. Whatever these parents invest in sharing books with their children will never go to waste and no one can take that time away from them.

WILSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Karen Lykens is a teacher at Wilson Middle School in Muncie, Indiana. This is her second year using the *Parents Sharing Books* program in her school, and it continues to be a success! We believe that Karen's personal ability to adapt PSB to her parents' and students' needs is a decisive factor in the success of Wilson's *Parents Sharing Books* program. Karen is slow to take credit for the program's success in her school, but her story echoes the kind of enthusiasm, dedication, and tenacity necessary to carry out an effective parent involvement program.

Behind Karen's easy smile and quick laughter is a leader who implies that she appreciates any type of support, but can carry on if the support is no longer there. She says she is "self-driven" and her experiences as a mother, a teacher at various grade levels, and a school leader are the source of beliefs that she brings to her successful parent involvement program.

In Karen's opinion, PSB leaders in schools such as Wilson, must do preliminary work before they can expect parents to become involved participants. Positive contacts must be made with parents about the progress, behavior, and attitude of their children. Using the telephone to convey "good things" to parents about their children allows for a positive dialogue to develop between the school and home. When phoning isn't possible, a home visit is next on the list! As Karen indicates, "there is always something else I can try when one thing doesn't work."

Karen believes that when teachers implement new programs, parents must be informed about the purpose of the program, what teachers are willing to do, and the role parents are expected to play. She emphasizes "expected", because she feels that if responsibility isn't given back or shared with parents and families for becoming involved in their children's academic life, many will not take the initiative to do this on their own.

She provides a strong model for parents. She demonstrates in various ways that she is involved with their children as a teacher, and she expects them to be involved as parents. It is evident that Karen invests heavily in this program and in her students. She comes together with parents as an equal partner—she wants as much for their children as she does for her own. Her deliberate way of making parents feel at ease during parent meetings, sharing in small groups, and talking "with" parents, not "to" them, provides a non-threatening environment that encourages not just parents, but families, to return.

Karen recognizes the importance of advertising her *Parents Sharing Books* program. She uses local media, such as the radio station and newspapers, to announce and publicize *Parents Sharing Books* meetings. She sees that meetings are announced over the school's PA system and flyers are sent home to all students. Phoning parents or stopping by the home is a major tactic for recruiting parents. Karen utilizes the parent coordinators at her school to contact parents about upcoming meetings and works with other teachers to initiate effective parent involvement programs.

In addition, Karen possesses the ability to take the information and concepts of the *Parents Sharing Books* program and adapt it to her community's needs. She understands that teachers who promote parent involvement must respect their parents' time and commitments to

other things. Therefore, Karen implies that a practical approach to *Parents Sharing Books* is necessary.

This approach has helped Karen to integrate PSB with other Lilly projects that she is involved with, and thus make the three programs work together so that they have a dynamic impact on parent involvement in her school. She is aware that parents will only give so much time to coming into the school to meet, so she incorporates many activities and sources of information for parents into one evening's program. Emphasis is placed on making this evening informative as well as social. Parents look forward to returning to learn, to share with their children, and to talk with other parents.

Karen's *Parents Sharing Books* program and other parent involvement approaches are unique to her school's situation because she has adapted them to her community's needs. Karen takes full and effective advantage of the program's flexibility. We believe that Karen's middle school parent involvement program merits the acknowledgement and attention of other PSB leaders who are grappling with parent involvement and PSB implementation in their schools.

Karen: Muncie is a typical factory town with a university, Ball State, adding a little bit of class to it. There are two middle schools, Wilson and Northside, in the Muncie area. Our school [Wilson] is a neighborhood school that has an enrollment of about 700 hundred students. It is just 7th and 8th grade only, and 85 percent of our kids are on free lunches; whereas the other middle school in Muncie has 20 percent of their students on free lunches. They [the administration] expect us to do the same things in both middle schools. We can't do that. Our kids come from a different world than the kids across town.

Many of our students come from illiterate, low socioeconomic families. Our students live in homes that are good examples of "the extended family." There are many students who are living with one parent; maybe the grandparent or an aunt or uncle is raising the child. There may be a parent in the home, but it is an older sister or brother who is the parent figure to the younger children in the home. Some of our students are the older brother or sister and are fulfilling that role.

Many of our students have never been out of this city. The mall across town may be as far as they ever get away from home. Going to Indianapolis on a field trip is a big deal for many of these children. Their parents love the opportunity to go on a field trip, because many of them have never been out of Muncie.

Our facility is much older than the other middle school. The state has come in and told us that the building must be closed, so a new middle school is being planned. We will include the 6th grade when the new middle school opens. Our new school will be located almost to the county line so that most or all of the students will be bused in.

The busing will be a good thing. Right now, our students can walk to school, and we have a lot of damage being done to the neighborhoods, personal property, and such, as the students walk to and from school. We have students coming to our school who are not living in the area or neighborhood. The juvenile center or detention home is across town, but these students are sent over here to school anyway.

It takes a very compassionate person to work at this school. Most of the teachers who do work here have chosen to teach here and to be with these kids. They are compassionate people and can handle the students and know what they need. There's an unconditional support for our students that exists here among teachers. We know about our kids' home lives and many of us don't shy away from doing all we can to help these kids. We have respect for these kids, and in turn they respect us. They don't feel threatened in our classrooms, but all of us understand where we stand and how far we can go.

These kids aren't like your typical middle school student. You don't hear much criticism of one another about what someone is wearing or ostracizing someone because of what they wear. They'll get on one another, but they also know they have to depend on one another to make it. Teachers see that same carry-over in their work and how they work together.

When we set up our parent meetings, we mix types of students and parents. We don't single out just the below-average students and invite their parents to come. We put it on the radio, in the newspaper, over the PA system, send flyers home with all the students, and we have a parent coordinator that calls the parents to get them here. That flyer or cover letter that goes home explains the program, what we will be doing, support we expect from them, and we make it real clear that we are involved with their children and we also want them involved.

It gets them here—along with some bribery! We have refreshments, and we provide incentives for them to participate in the activities we have arranged for that evening. We give prizes for various things; finishing one of the activities first, a student who may have both parents here, whatever we can think of. Businesses are good about giving us prizes and coupons when we solicit them. Sometimes it comes out of my pocket when it comes to providing refreshments, but oftentimes the school will provide the drinks from the pop machines here at school.

Sometimes we get the mom here; other times it may be the father, a grandparent, or a neighbor lady. Anybody can come and we have a mixture of parents and adults; parents with below-average, average, and above-average children. We weren't real sure how the two dichotomies would get along, but remember that many of our students come from families who grew up in the same neighborhood and never got out. This was their school, too, and they grew up together. Some of their same teachers are still here. So they know each other from the "neighborhood." We invite anybody. Some parents who are not from this area, like in the county, have heard about it over the radio and have come to participate. They tell us that we've been painted as the "bad" school, but we have something to offer that their school doesn't offer—Math Night for Parents and *Parents Sharing Books*.

I have students who want to come, and they tell me their parents want to come, but then they don't show up. After I begin to ask some questions of the student, I may find out there's no transportation to get here. They may not have a car, or they live too far to walk and the buses don't run after a certain time. We make a phone call or stop by their home and ask them to come. We tell them someone will pick them up!

There are students who want to come and regardless how much we "chip away" at the parent and call them, we just can't get them involved. Then what we do in this situation is make sure this child is put with another family or parent that night. We check with the students to make sure they know the parent and will feel comfortable working with them. We make sure the

student has a ride to and from the school that night. We may not get that parent involved, but the parent sees that we care and continue to be involved with their child.

I have a philosophy of my own about parenting, teaching, and involving parents in the schools. I understand that maybe somewhere you have to draw the line, but as a parent, I look at my own kids and I ask myself what kind of a teacher do I want them to have. That's the kind of teacher I want to be. I want to be asked as a parent to be a participant in their school. Sometimes I'm not asked, and therefore, I don't participate. I take that same thinking into teaching. I've got to ask parents to help me.

I don't get down very often. You just keep plugging along trying to make things work for you. When my own two kids show up with me to these things, other parents know that I'm a mother, as well as their children's teacher. They see that I have multiple commitments just like they do. They see that I'm willing to give to their children what I want for my own.

As a teacher, I love to read, and at a young age I appreciated the value of reading and coming from a home that supported education and reading. I'm a math teacher with a strong reading background, and I want my students to see that reading and math are part of their everyday life. I want these kids not only to see the value of reading in the basics of life and in their everyday activities, but I want them to appreciate what reading can offer them. We read in math class. Sometimes I read to them; other times they may pick a book to read when we're finished with the lesson or assignment. I'd like to receive a set of classics that has been "toned down" for my students. They need to be exposed to books that may resemble some of the problems they are really living, but they also need to see that there is a softer side of life; one that's not all harsh.

I do this kind of teaching with a lot of enthusiasm and commitment; I'm self-driven. I don't need a lot of reward. I just want kids to know that I'm here, I'm interested, and if there's anything extra I can do to help them along, I do it. As a teacher, I try to do the best I can while I have the student.

I do my "ground work" when it comes to promoting parent involvement. I try to establish a positive relationship with my parents right away, and then when I or the parent coordinator call to ask them to attend parent-involvement programs, they are more willing to attend. I do this by contacting parents frequently to let them know positive things about their children. You can't just contact parents when you want something from them. I've got to let them know about the good things their children are doing, and that as their teacher, I want this [type of behavior or performance] to continue. I come right out and ask them to work with me to help continue these good things.

Parent Sharing Books and Math Night [at Wilson] is a real family affair! We plan activities for the little kids so they can participate. We try to do things in nonthreatening ways. When parents first come to the meetings, we may hear that they don't really want to be here. They didn't like school, didn't want to be here as students, don't want to come back as parents, and sometimes don't even support their children being in school. We've got to do things that will encourage them to want to come back.

Many of our students are responsible for younger brothers and sisters at home, so we encourage storytelling and reading aloud at these meetings. We provide opportunities for parents and children to read aloud to each other, tell stories, or share with one another a book that other families at the meeting may be reading. We bring in books, paper, pencils, crayons, games, and whatever you can think of to get them involved in positive activities they can do at home with their children. We show them how math and reading relate and some things they can do at home to promote this.

We work in small groups, and I like this. Sometimes we've had as many as 80 people here and, to be real honest, that's too many. I like it when 30 show up; I can get around to everybody then. I wear my blue jeans just like they do and I get down on the floor or sit around a table to work with them. When they ask me for help, I make them feel like they are doing a good job. I tell them just to ask questions they are interested in finding out for themselves. I tell them, "don't make them feel like you are giving them a test!"

They [parents and children] like to be read aloud to during these meetings. We try to do that at every meeting. We may read to a certain point and then have them do a writing activity, like "finish the story." The little kids might draw a picture for us, and we encourage them to share with the group what they have done. We always do things and then emphasize that they can do the same things when reading at home with their children. We have storytellers come in occasionally, and they like that, too.

It's fun to watch what goes on at these meetings, because we insist that our students can't come by themselves. They need to bring a parent or an adult to work with. We actually have the students and parents or adults working together at these meetings. It is so funny, because the lower kids have had to work hard [at academic things] all their lives and the upper kids haven't. When you get the two together, you hear the students who have more difficulty in school showing their parents how to do things or helping them work things out. Better students aren't always that helpful and patient with their parents. Sometimes they don't even know how to help or work with their parents. Typically, we think above-average students have strong parents, but not always. Many of them don't know how to help their children on a one-on-one situation. I think many of those parents, who have children who are doing well in school, are just as glad to be here to learn.

We have students who are bothered by the fact that their parents may not be able to read with them at home or the parents can't help their children with work at home. I encourage both parents and children to read and do things together by saying, "So, don't let that bother you; learn from each other," or "This is fun reading. You don't have to read every word; skip over the ones you don't need." I'd like to expand this program and use these same concepts of reading aloud and sharing to help parents with basic reading skills. I think if parents know they can get help along with other parents and adults in a comfortable setting, we can get them in here.

Some are concerned that it will take them too long to read a book. I make them feel they can use the book as long as they need to. They eventually bring it back and no one knows how long they've had it. We have a real laid-back system for checking the books out. You just select a book and bring it back when you're finished. I've lost a couple of books, but that's okay. It's probably in someone's home where there aren't any other books or reading materials.

By the end of the year these parent meetings become social events for them. They offer more comments about what they are doing to help their children at home. They slowly begin to share what is going on in their life. One parent talked about how she used to come home and do more work. Now she helps her child with homework; the child reads to her while she does dishes, and she said they are beginning to talk more. When one parent opens up, the others feel more comfortable doing the same.

I don't always run the programs the way they say I should in the manual. But this [PSB] program stands on its own. I take the information and ideas that are given to me and make them into a program that will fit my parents' and students' needs. I'm also involved in other Lilly projects, and I think this is why the program has worked. We have the math program, *Parents Sharing Books*, and *Teachers under Cover* project. I make them all work together. I don't run parents and students into the school for separate meetings and activities. The parents can come in and take advantage of all of this once a month; math and reading in a variety of ways. Students take home the books that I read with *Teachers under Cover* project, and they let their parents read them. I have kids picking out books that they think their parents will like from the PSB bookshelf as well as the books from *Teachers under Cover*.

I can't return the forms and evaluations for the PSB program because your forms don't fit my program. But I do know that it's working; these three programs have worked well together for our kind of parent and student. I have parents that are not comfortable filling out questionnaires. That's threatening to my parents. If I did that to them, they wouldn't come back. But they keep coming back. We have from 30 - 80 attending the meetings, and it's working, or they wouldn't be coming back.

I know it must be doing something for these students, too. They get excited when more books come. They like to see new things and need to know that someone cares out there; not just people inside their world.

APPENDIX L:
Attitudes and Perspectives that Influenced PSB Success

Themes that emerged in a few of our stories were 'attitudes' and 'perspectives'; attitudes and perspectives that schools and parents possessed about parent involvment. Some PSB leaders shared their stories about how difficult it was to initiate parent involvement programs in their schools. They analyzed the set-backs they had in implementing their PSB programs. A few suggested that lack of school support, negative community attitudes, and the low value that parents in their community placed on education made it more difficult to initiate parent involvment programs in their schools. These PSB leaders speculated that the lack of interest or low numbers of parents in their program reflected the low value parents placed on reading, and a further belief that education was not their [parents'] job.

Leaders who experienced difficulty in initiating their PSB programs hinted that it was more difficult to recruit parents from the PSB's proposed target population. They implied that parents in their community had different educational values and expectations for their children. But in one instance, a parent leader discussed their school's approach to communicating with parents, and she offered her opinion as to how this was interpreted by some parents who wanted to be involved with their children's education. These leaders' stories articulated specific obstacles that schools and parents must overcome, and offered practical suggestions for changes that need to occur.

MIDDLETOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Beth was one of the twenty-three leader teams that received PSB training during the Fall 1990 *Parents Sharing Books* Training Seminar. Beth was a teacher for a number of years in the community. She remains active as a parent volunteer at Middletown Middle School where her daughter attends school. Middletown is one of two middle schools serving seventh and eighth grade students in the Middle County School Corporation. Beth speaks frankly with the PSB staff about "Middletown's school situation" and what she regards as possible reasons for "[the] lack of success of PSB in Middletown middle schools."

Beth has had mixed experiences with Middletown's PSB. She served as PSB's leader for part of the last year. Beth has had difficulty identifying prospective parents/teachers outside of her social circle in town. She recognizes that some parents are already predisposed toward advocating literacy and education for their children. Thus, she recruited a homogenous sample group. The characteristics of this group are not congruent with the proposed target population outline in PSB's goal statement.

Beth thinks some participating parents want to use books as communication vehicles with their children. For example, Beth and her daughter used joint reading as a means to further build their mother/daughter bond. PSB's related goal of fostering parent and child communication through books has been partially met in Middletown.

Beth hints that the Family Literacy Center may find it difficult recruiting parents from the PSB's proposed target population. She implies that parents have different educational values and expectations for their children. She states that some parents don't care about their children's education. We believe that this may be a correct observation of some parents' educational expectations for their children. We think this type of parental attitude is characteristic of some of the parents in the PSB's proposed target group.

In addition, Beth suggests that we must take a sober view of recruiting middle school students' parents for the local PSB program. Her first-hand knowledge suggests that involved middle school parents have been involved as elementary school parents. Typically, the mother is the involved parent with the school system. She doesn't expect that uninvolved elementary school parents would become involved middle school parents.

In Beth's view, the existence of dual career couples has had a negative impact on the mother's involvement with their children's education. A mother who is working full-time often feels like she doesn't have the time to invest in her children's extra educational projects at the school.

Beth implies that the site-based innovative programs often lack the support of the school superintendent's office or site-based management teams. She thinks that innovative programs like PSB must be implemented by street-level bureaucrats in order for them to be effective. Beth advocates that the staff from the Family Literacy Center should develop an incentive package for persuading teachers to assume leadership role with PSB. We feel that her suggestion has a great deal of merit. PSB's original proposal outlines some possible incentive program options for local community efforts.

We believe that leader's investment level with PSB contributed to the success, mixed success, or lack of success of PSB programs at the local level. Beth's investment was relatively modest with PSB. She had been involved in different voluntary programs in earlier years within the community. We believe that this experience should have provided her a framework for resolving ambiguities with different service projects. Specifically, Beth should have contacted PSB's central staff about tips on s[illegible]ting parents from the target population.

Then, too, the location of PSB's central staff in Middletown has potential benefits for the local programs. PSB's central staff should designate a liaison person to interact with leaders on the phone or in person. The absence of a liaison with Middletown contributed to the modest success of PSB in this town.

Beth: I was motivated to get involved with the *Parents Sharing Books* project [PSB] for a couple of reasons. I was a teacher in the Middletown school system here for quite some time. I am not teaching right now, but I am very concerned with the state of teaching in our community. My concern for teaching is probably the reason that I decided to become the PSB's group leader when the position became vacant last spring. I am kind of embarrassed that PSB did not get off the ground in Middletown.

I attempted to recruit parents and students for the program last spring. I selected prospective parents and students for the PSB from my circle of friends and associates in Middletown. We didn't have one father wanting to affiliate with PSB. I believe that mothers' commitment to volunteerism in their children's schools is the distinctive characteristic binding the parent participants together. My impression is the mothers began wanting to assist their children's development during elementary school. The parents continue this pattern following their children's moving to middle school. I find it hard to believe that if a mother wasn't involved with her son's/daughter's elementary education that she would begin getting involved at the middle school level.

The parents from my circle had a strong commitment to education before their involvement with PSB. My impression is that, in most families, one of the parent(s) had attended college and earned at least a BA degree. I realize that parents outside of my circle were excluded from participating in PSB. I would have liked more heterogeneity within the parental group. We didn't get off to an early start last spring and I believe this contributed to the homogeneous parental selection process. I wish that PSB's administrative staff would provide me some direction on selecting a heterogeneous PSB for Middletown. Frankly, I believe there are a lot of people in this community who don't care anything about their children's education. I think that families with dual career marriages don't have the time to become deeply involved with their children's schools.

Those mothers that wanted to get involved in PSB had different motives for working with this project. I spoke with one parent who was concerned with her son's reading material. The mother stated that the young man only read golf magazines. She went on to say that she would like him to read other things besides this kind of magazine. Besides, she said that she really was not interested in golf. Therefore, she felt she couldn't discuss the magazines during their discussions. Her husband enjoys golf a great deal and the mother felt the reading and discussion of a golf magazine would help their relationship. I told this mother that it really doesn't matter what your son reads as long as he reads. I went on to say that she should encourage him to read

the golf magazine. Her son may get turned on to reading through golf magazines, and then he might want to read other things.

I learned that other parents thought that the PSB project would help them improve family communication. Parents are learning that peer pressure plays an important role in our sons/daughters development during these years. We can provide different life alternatives from the peer group through reading and sharing with our middle school students. Parents can use reading and discussing a book as a reciprocal communication bridge with the daughter/son.

I feel that parents should try and praise their children for the positive things that they do in life. Society has changed a great deal since many parents were their children's ages. Our parents didn't feel the need to praise us like we should praise children of today. I suspect that our parents would tell other people that they were proud of us. But parents would not tell us that they were proud of us. I think that they may have been more humble than today's parents. Then, too, I suspect that our parents wanted to keep us from getting a big head. I believe strongly that our kids need us as much or more than we needed our parents. We should be there for the kids when they come in from school.

My own personal experience was the highlight of my involvement with PSB. My daughter, Kristi, and I had a good relationship before our joint involvement with the PSB program. Our involvement has helped our relationship in unique ways. I have the opportunity to become familiar with the books that my daughter's peers are reading outside of school. I feel there are some really good young adult books out there. This variety of books didn't exist when parents were our children's ages. I was very gratified when Kristi would come and tell me about good books for us to jointly read. She would say, "Hey, Mom, you should read this book...it is really good." I'm glad that I am not the only one recommending books for us to read. Many of us in this group found out that books can be used as vehicles for communicating with our children.

I am uncertain about how helpful I can be concerning your evaluation process. Honestly, I'm kind of embarrassed about PSB's lack of progress at my daughter's school. We got off to a slow start for a couple of reasons in Middletown. The school's support staff tended to forward all Lilly-related information to a certain teacher. I am not sure when she received the PSB information from the Family Literacy Center. I don't know when she passed the material on to the former PSB leader. The former leader has been involved with different things in the community. I do know that she has been quite busy with her senior and middle school sons' different extra-curricular activities. I don't think that she had the time to actually implement PSB at Middletown. She moved out of her leader position, and I moved into this position with the present PSB leader. This was not the smoothest leadership transition. I got involved with the project late. My late involvement did not help the project's future success. I would have loved to use the school's newsletter to inform parents about PSB, but I didn't have the printing schedule for the newsletter. Another problem is that the newsletters from school do not come out on a regular basis. It's hard to know when the deadline is for getting announcements printed in the newsletter.

I feel that our slow start was complicated by our school's non-supportive attitude toward parental involvement with the school. The physical size of our school and student overcrowding have discouraged parental involvement. The school was built on four different levels. The

building was designed to hold several hundred students as opposed to the thousand students who currently attend Middletown. The school curriculum is organized around the block system. The block system means that students will have sort of a small school environment in a large middle school. Students attend the same cluster of classes with several teachers. The block system and physical size of the building do not support PSB-related innovation and expansion to all parents and students in our school.

I am a former teacher, and I feel parental involvement with the school is an important component of the children's educational process. My impression is that teachers do not want to work with the parents of a thousand or more students. Teachers appear reluctant to bring the parents into the classroom. Last fall, we attended the parent and student open house at the middle school. I signed up for different school committees. I was never contacted by the teacher who chaired the committees. I have spoken with other parents who signed up for parent and school committees. Their experiences have been very similar to mine. I get involved at school because, in the past, I have personally contacted individual teachers who I knew were involved in intensive class projects and asked if I could help out. Mostly these are classrooms that my daughter has been in. That's how I find out if there are special projects going on. I had signed up to help out in the library, but I was never contacted about coming into the school to help in the library. I approached the librarian about giving her some assistance and shared with her the fact that I had signed up to work in the library, but I was never called. She told me she never saw any cards where parents had signed up to volunteer for certain activities.

I would recommend that the key PSB organizers reconsider sending project materials to the superintendent's office. It appears that PSB material has not been distributed to interested teachers at our school. My impression is that the PSB material just collects dust on some superintendent's desk. Parents would never learn about the project through this distribution process. I recommend that you send PSB material to one key individual at each school site.

I think teachers will make your best PSB leaders. This option is not perfect due to the present demands on teachers' instructional time. Teachers feel a lot of work-related stress depending on the time of year. Teachers must attend and participate in intensive in-service training programs during the two weeks before school starts in August. This two-week period would not be a good time to implement the project. Teachers would not have the quality time necessary to implement the project. We cannot wait to launch the project at the end of the semester. Parents, teachers and students will be tired at this stage of the year. This collective fatigue would not help the prospects of the project with parents and students. We should realize that parents', teachers', and students' enthusiasm for school will last for a few weeks into the semester. We should try and implement PSB during this collective enthusiasm for school. I would recommend that PSB be implemented during the few weeks following the beginning of school. Potential teacher leaders would have time to adjust their schedule in order to take on this additional task. I have observed that timing mistakes have contributed to the failure of many school-sponsored programs.

RIVERTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Rivertown Middle School is located in a rural Indiana community. Jane, the PSB leader describes it as "very conservative." Jane is a counselor at Rivertown Middle School. Mary is a parent who attended a PSB training seminar with Jane.

Jane's and Mary's PSB program has not been successful. There is no precedent of parent involvement at this middle school. According to Jane, she has tried numerous times to get parents involved in this program. Parent involvement is not encouraged once children leave the elementary level. The elementary school in Rivertown reports better parent involvement, according to Jane.

Jane attributes their unsuccessful attempts to implement a PSB program to a lack of parental interest and persistent problems with parent/school communication. Mary says education and reading don't have a high priority in this insular, conservative, working-class community. Even though their PSB program has not been successful, Mary talks about her personal experience with positive aspects of the program in very pragmatic terms. The information Mary has gained from the program helps her in understanding some of her own reading styles and preferences.

After I inquire about possibilities for confronting their difficulties, and I make suggestions for attempting new approaches with their PSB program, Jane is able to take these suggestions and provide additional ways the program might be improved.

Jane: I feel that maybe I have dropped the ball on this thing [PSB]. We worked hard to try to involve parents—refreshments, advertisement, and enthusiasm—but after working so hard and then not having people show up time and time again, it is hard to keep your motivation. This program [PSB] is still needed at this school. It has been extremely difficult to get anything going in this school.

We have PTA at the elementary school, but we don't have any type of parent involvement at the middle school. Parents in this community don't seem to want to get involved. They will come for athletic events, but they just won't come for anything that is educational.

Mary: I think we really tried to get our PSB group started, because we both felt it was something this school could use. We set up a booth at our open house after we came back from the *Parents Sharing Books* training session. We probably had close to 200 parents at this open house and practically every one of them walked passed our booth. We had a lot of people pick up our information.

Jane: The first year we tried to get PSB going we sent flyers home with all the students in addition to passing out materials at the open house. We made a list of those parents who indicated an interest in PSB at the open house. Then I had teachers recommend students who they felt would benefit from this program and who would be enthusiastic about getting involved in something like this. Mary compiled these recommendations and made a list of parents she could call. She called parents before every one of our meetings that first year.

Our list was made up of a cross-section of parents and students. I think some of the parents on the list value education for their children and others don't. By asking teachers for recommendations, we drew from both types of backgrounds.

Although we contacted thirty-plus people for our meetings, we still only had two or three enthusiastic parents come to the first and second meeting that first year. The enthusiasm these parents had for this program was enough to continue with additional meetings.

The parents on our list whose children could have benefitted from PSB never came. There were a few parents who did show up the first year, and they seemed to be very enthusiastic about PSB. But as the school year progressed, they seemed to fizzle out and they weren't very good about coming to the meetings. The one mother was very enthusiastic about getting this started at home with her daughter, and she thought it was an important thing to do at home. They dropped out after a while because the daughter was involved in a lot of other things. The mother also had another child at home. Her son has difficulty with reading and school, and she told me that she just kept the books around to make them available for him. She didn't sit down and read with him. They were having a hard time finding the time to do it together.

One parent came whose son didn't like to read. This mother was trying real hard to do FSB at home with her son. Another parent was very enthusiastic, too. He got his son interested in reading *Arachnophobia*, and that's the book that got him going. I didn't hear how they were doing. Follow-up hasn't been very good since most of them weren't real good about attending the meetings regularly.

Mary: I did call every one of the parents on my list before each meeting. I always made a point to say that these were positive meetings, and that PSB was an opportunity to come together to discuss our children's concerns during this stage. When I would call, there would be several people who sounded like they had good intentions, but then they wouldn't show up at the meetings. It seemed like many of the parents I called sounded interested, but always had something else going on for that night.

I think some of the people were getting a little perturbed that I kept calling. This was discouraging to make the phone calls, have many of them say they would be there, and then not have anyone show up.

Jane: The second year we didn't make any phone calls, because of the discouragement and feelings Mary had from the previous year. The second year we opened it up to anybody. I didn't ask teachers to make recommendations. We have announcements over the intercom every morning at our school, and it was announced over that. We have verbal announcements first thing in the morning to the students and then that's it. We do not send any type of bulletin or newsletter home. The main reason for doing it this way is because so many of them [announcements/ bulletins] don't get home.

Mary: I think the majority of our PSB announcements probably went home that first year, but a very small percentage of the parents actually saw the announcement. Some of the parents I called told me on the phone they hadn't seen the paper, but their child was in the background telling the parent that they had forgotten to give them the paper as I was explaining the PSB program to them! I think it's probably true that a lot of students don't give the announcements to their

parents, but I think many of those announcements do get home. I also think a lot of students get these announcements to their parents.

I think that communication between the school and home is sometimes very poor. I can't explain why this is, but I am one parent who is interested in being a part of my daughter's education. I was here at open house not because I found out from my daughter remembering to tell me, but because I kept calling the school to find out when it was going to be. I can understand how discouraging it must be to send information home that never gets home, but I also think there are interested parents out there like I am. If parents are not used to getting announcements or newsletters, it may be a case where parents don't think to ask for the information every day that has been given to children. I know my own daughter forgets to tell us things. She hears these announcements in the morning and by the time she gets home, she has forgotten them. It's not that she doesn't want us here at school. It's just a matter of forgetting what announcements were given in the morning.

Jane: As a counselor, I have passed things out and will see things trashed as soon as I hand them out. Some of the things I have passed out were important things. I think this kind of scene creates a hesitancy to send things home with children.

I did try to give the program a lot of publicity in the newspaper. There were articles in our local newspaper announcing our PSB program for both years we tried to start it. The second year we tried it, we opened it up to anybody that wanted to participate. Like I said, we advertised it again at open house, we used the announcement from the manual and put it on the radio, I introduced it at orientation for incoming 6th graders, and both years the newspaper ran large articles about the PSB program.

I think we're just like every other school. We have a mixture of parents. We have some parents that care and those students do well, and I [counselor] never hear from them. Or we have students that do poorly, and the parents have negative attitudes about the school and how their children are doing in school. Either they don't care any more at the middle school, and have given up, or they [parents] are just as frustrated as the children, and they have given up. They give you the impression that they don't know how to deal with it anymore, and whatever you need to do with their children, just do it and don't bother them. We have a few that really care and are still trying to seek avenues to help their children.

I also had a student whom I was helping. I didn't get her mother involved, but I encouraged her to read the books from the PSB Bookshelf. She is a student who has been retained, with a standardized score in the 95th percentile. She has read all my PSB books. She reads constantly, but doesn't share them with me. By getting her involved in the program, she could encourage others to do the same. That might be an idea! I'm trying to get her to come out of her shell, and I know I'll have her for another year. Maybe that would give her some responsibility; [have her] read the book and then share the book with a small group. That would get her involved and help to bring her out a little bit. This might help her see that there's more outside those covers she's hiding under.

I do see some changes in her. I have her involved in a group situation, and she is beginning to interact. Things are turning around for her, and this might be just what she needs.

She's in a foster home, and the foster mother is willing to do anything to help. The foster mother might be a good one to get involved in PSB next year.

I can think of another parent that might be willing to try this. She's at a point that she's willing to do anyting. But not every parent is that willing, and I don't know if some parents would see this [PSB] as an avenue for helping their children and themselves. It seems like many of the parents I must deal with are so overwhelmed with everything. For them to take on one more thing is overwhelming to them.

Mary: I can understand how difficult it must be for some of these parents to be involved in things outside the home and their work. It's difficult [even for nonworking moms] to keep up with everyone's schedules. I think that it must be even more difficult for parents who are both working to keep things going inside the home and attend to outside commitments as well.

There is a large percentage of people in this area who don't see education as important. Many of these people moved here from southern parts of the country after the Depression and World War II to look for work. These people were poor and uneducated for the most part, but they were able to find work here and so they settled around this area. People could find work in the factories near here. The children and grandchildren of these families still live here. For many of these people, education wasn't important, and this attitude has been passed down through the family for generations.

When I was a child, my parents never read to us except our Sunday school readings. That was it. But when I was at school, I developed a love for reading when I was in third grade. I had a teacher who read to us every day after lunch. She started reading the "Little House" books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. I loved those books so much. And I think that's what got me started reading.

I wanted to pass that love on to my kids so I read to them. I think because of the information in the PSB manual I have learned some things about my own reading habits and attitudes. It's funny, but when my husband wants to read me an article from the newspaper I would much rather read it myself. He gets frustrated and says, "Your parents never read to you, did they?" I never thought about that modeling factor, but it's probably true. I never had parents who read to me so it is difficult for me to have some one read to me. Even though PSB hasn't taken off in the school, we have tried to participate in the *Parents Sharing Books* [program] at home because of all the things I have learned.

We have always read with our children. Our daughter [middle school student] is good about coming to us and asking us to read with her. I read with our younger twin sons, but this [PSB] has kind of been something she and her father share. She loves Roald Dahl books, and she has gotten him interested in them! In fact, this morning, he went in to work real early and came home later for breakfast. He was sitting at the table eating breakfast and reading one of the Roald Dahl books that she had picked up in the library!

I see our daughter growing up. I see this stage now where she is more independent and growing away from us. There are times when she is more aloof, but it's funny. She still wants us to read with her. She and I read *When Parents Drive You Crazy*. I enjoyed this! We talked about

people's interactions and how we think. It's probably something that we wouldn't have just decided to talk about had it not been for this book.

Jane: I was going to present the idea of *Parents Sharing Books* to the elementary teachers at one of their meetings but I just never got around to it. Since we have tried for two years to get something started at the middle school and nothing has developed, maybe we'll have a much better chance getting it started at the fifth grade. These fifth graders will be coming into the middle school next year. They have parent meetings at the elementary, and supposedly they are well attended. We could put PSB in a series of parent meetings, and maybe introduce it as a way to maintain communication with the child. If we can get it [PSB] in place before they leave the fifth grade, then it might survive through the middle school.

Mary: I think it might work to also include the information that PSB can help their children get ready for middle school. I think every parent is apprehensive about sending his or her elementary child to the middle school. Just from listening to everyone else, I knew when I sent my daughter to the middle school that there wouldn't be much feedback. To know that communication with the school will be cut off can be upsetting. I would have appreciated having something like this [PSB] before our daughter left the elementary school.

Jane: I don't mean to be pessimistic, but I have heard that the elementary has offered some good programs and speakers at their parent meetings, and no one shows up. If I were to do it at the elementary level, I think I would approach some of the teachers. It might be better to work through individual teachers and have them present the PSB materials to parents whose children are in their classroom.

It might be a good idea to work with parents in the community who have positive attitudes about school. If they can get involved in the program, then maybe they can get others involved who are more reluctant to do something like this.

I've even thought of having meetings during the day; during the school day when maybe some of the parents could come in during their lunch time. It might work to meet in the library. They could eat and talk about the books. I could share information from *Parents Sharing Books* and things like this. I know this would exclude some people, but for two years we have tried offering it in the evenings, and it hasn't been that successful. Maybe this is another alternative we can try.

I thought the [PSB] training was very thorough. I knew what to do. We just couldn't get the parents here. The only way you [the PSB staff] could have helped us would have been to bring the people!

I think some of us [school faculty] know this is an area [parent involvement] that needs work. We're just not sure what the best avenue is or which way to go. We sent out questionnaires to get parents' opinions. When these came back, they [parents] wanted to see more participation. But then one of the questions asked, "Would you participate in parent meetings if held?", and many of them responded "No!" We all want parent involvement, but we don't want it to upset our schedules or inconvenience us in any way. We've got to find that magic formula, and we haven't found it yet.

BAYTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview: Sally Davis is a librarian at the Baytown Community School. Middle-grade and high-school students attend classes in the same building. The student population draws from small, rural communities surrounding the area.

In our interview with Sally, she comments that in the past education hasn't been valued as it should be in the community, and that parent involvement is not a priority. The technological changes that local industries are moving toward are influencing parents' attitudes about education. Sally speaks frankly about the frequent turnover in administration at her school, and how that has affected the support teachers receive from the school and the community.

Sally's input about the demographic characteristics of her community and educational values held by students and parents offers some explanation for the difficulty she is experiencing in implementing a *Parents Sharing Books* program in her school. There is resistance to parent involvement programs from both faculty and parents. Sally feels that people in the community think that education is the province of the teacher and takes place only in the classroom. They either don't understand their role in helping their children, or they don't want to accept the responsibility for helping their children improve academically.

Sally's reflection on and analysis of her experience with implementing PSB offers her an opportunity to present detailed and practical suggestions about what she can do to make the program work in her school.

Sally: The people in this community are mostly blue-collar workers. Many of the parents work in factories at Baytown, and other factories located close to Baytown. These are pretty good paying jobs. About ten years ago they conducted a survey before North Central came to evaluate our school. It was determined that the average level of education [adult population] was about sixth grade level. Education hasn't been important here, but that is starting to change. The workplace in this area is starting to influence how people feel about education. Factories are employing fewer people, some factories are upgrading their hiring standards, and adults are without jobs. These factors influence peoples' thinking.

I think getting parents involved in our educational programs is fairly new to this community. The students whose parents are involved with the school tend to stay in school and perform better academically.

Baytown has other Lilly projects, and some of them are going okay. The *Book Shop* [another Lilly project] workers' interest seems to burn out quickly. The *Book Shop* or *Parents Sharing Books* doesn't get much special recognition. We need to find a way to make programs like PSB and *Book Shop* more attractive so that kids will want to get involved and stay involved throughout the school year.

I realize I haven't given the PSB program my best effort. I'm very busy during the school day. Anything I do for *Parents Sharing Books* has been after school, and on my own time. I don't have any free time during the day, I don't get released time, and I have to leave the library to make parent contacts by phone. It isn't very convenient.

Time is a factor, and I guess it's that way everywhere. People are meeting'd to death, and if one even suggests a meeting it's like...UH, another meeting! I guess parents feel that way, too. The parents we think would be good participants in our program are interested in their kids can't seem to find a convenient time to come to our meetings. With me, I have two children who aren't even school-age yet, and I can't commit myself to early morning meetings. Even evening meetings are difficult for me, because I'm a single parent.

I think PR [public relations] is another thing. We need to find some gimmick or way to get parents interested in PSB so they will decide "Oh, this isn't just another one of those meetings. This is a special kind of meeting that can help my child and me."

The year I tried to start PSB was a very hectic year at school. Things were in a turmoil, because we were losing a principal—kids were upset, teachers were upset, parents were upset. We have had 8 principals in the 20 years I have worked in this school. It's difficult to have administrative support and stability when administrative ranks change so frequently. I found it difficult to gain much support from the parents during this time.

I did get a few parents involved, or at least they knew what the program was about. I had a booth set up at the fall open house, and parents could pick up information about the program then. I was available for questions. Three parents showed an interest, and they even took some books home. I never had much feedback from those parents or their kids who participated, but I didn't go about finding out either.

Something that we now have in our area, and didn't have when I first tried to start PSB, is a curriculum coordinator. The coordinator has been very helpful in trying to implement programs that would involve the school, parents, and the community. She's been very helpful in collecting listings of resource people for all sorts of things for the community. I've thought about encouraging PSB for our elementary school. Parents seem to be more interested in outside school projects when their children are young.

One year ago a parent came to the main office and asked if she could volunteer at our school. Some one in the office told her they didn't think any of the teachers needed her help. I said that I would love to have a volunteer, and I called this person and asked her to come to help in the library. She has helped me a lot! I've had a very positive experience with this [type of] parent involvement.

One thing I would like is help with coordinating all of these programs. It would be helpful if other PSB leaders could gather and share what they have done to make their programs successful. I'm sure many of them are involved in other Lilly projects, and it would be helpful to know how to integrate the various programs.

I was in the first PSB training group, and it would have been helpful to have had a mentor to compare PSB programs with. I'd also suggest that participants have some input in the PSB Bookshelf. PSB leaders can help gauge their student-body reading interests, as they vary from community to community.

I felt many of the books on the PSB Bookshelf just didn't interest our students. I'm not saying the titles weren't good, but I felt some of the books in the collection better suited large,

inner-city school systems. We don't have African-American students in our school, and our students won't read books with African-American characters very readily. I know our students need to be aware of other people's cultures, but maybe Baytown students need books that are more similar to their own backgrounds to get them interested in reading first. Then they might be willing to learn about someone else's world.

As I mentioned before, I think about how PSB might have been different had we started at the elementary level. It would be great to work with one of our elementary-school teachers; maybe the fifth-grade level. When the students move to the junior high, the PSB program would already be in place. Parents are always concerned about sending their children to junior high, and maybe this would encourage parents to participate earlier.

I received PSB training late in the fall [last of October]*. I think late August or early September, when teachers and students are beginning to start a new school year, would be a better time to train leaders. I'd like to give this program [PSB] another shot. I'd like to get someone to help me, and maybe talk to other PSB leaders who have more than one Lilly project going to see how they are integrating and managing it all. I think this [PSB] is a great idea. All this support and these materials provided for small school systems who don't have a lot of money for extras are great!

*The first PSB training was held in October because the project was just getting started. Subsequent fall training sessions were held in late August or early September.

PSB Parents' and Children's Stories

In this second section of stories, parents and children talk about their book-sharing experiences and about important needs the PSB program filled. These stories deal with the practical applications of trying to get PSB started at home—the 'how to' and the 'what works'. But more importantly, each story reveals feelings and characteristics of individuals and family relationships—the humor of the storytellers; the respect that parents and children share for each other; the expectations and concerns of parents raising children to become responsible adults; the frustrations of children wanting independence, but also needing their parents' support and guidance; parents' realization that their children are growing up; the vulnerability of parents and children when they share their thoughts and ideas with one another; and the respect that develops between parents and children because they have shared.

The path to academic success begins with families like the ones who shared their stories with us. These families met the challenge of adjusting home habits, behaviors, and attitudes; they chose to participate in book sharing at home.

APPENDIX M: PSB Helped Parents Find Time

Some of the parents who participated in our PSB interviews were able to articulate ways in which they were able to 'find time' for PSB at home and make book sharing a 'family' gathering. In their opinion, parents must take the lead in adapting family schedules and initiating opportunities to share books with their children. These parents were realistic and practical about setting time aside at home for sharing books. They understood that"life does get hectic and parents become involved in the hang-ups of everyday living," but they also emphasized that parents have the ability to work through these situations when they consider their children and book sharing as priorities. These parents stressed that parents who want to share books with their children must 'plan' time to read and share with their children. One of the PSB participants we interviewed implied that "consistency" was important in establishing a family reading program. Parents must routinely take the lead in turning the TV off and initiating opportunities for enjoyable book sharing.

The Martin Family

Overview: Mr. and Mrs. Martin and their son, Kevin, meet with the FLC staff after school to discuss their involvement with, and to share their impressions, of the *Parents Sharing Books* program in their school. Even though Mr. Martin will be leaving for work immediately after this late afternoon conversation, he is willing to take the time from his busy and atypical work schedule to meet with us. We feel their story can provide a framework for families like the Martins, who are trying to resolve ambiguities with work schedules, homework, extra-curricular activities, and time for meaningful book-sharing at home.

The Martins are just getting started with the *Parents Sharing Books* program, but find Mrs. Lovelace's [PSB leader] parent recruitment approach to be a motivating factor for participating in PSB and PSB's evaluation. Mr. and Mrs. Martin recognize the enthusiasm and concern that the PSB leader has for their son's well-being. As parents, she makes them feel special by calling them on the phone. These phone calls are positive contacts that Mrs. Lovelace makes to parents about becoming involved in the Tolleston's PSB program and sharing student progress in school with parents. The Martins imply that this same concern, enthusiasm, and commitment is demonstrated at PSB parent meetings. They appreciate the"positive" feelings that have evolved from their acquaintance with Mrs. Lovelace and their participation in PSB; how the PSB leader talks to each parent individually, makes new parents feel welcome, and shares her knowledge of reading, children, and books so that parents can understand and relate to these same situations at home. The PSB leader values the contributions parents can make to their child's education by promoting positive parent involvement experiences. Mr. Martin thinks that most parents would respond to leader qualities such as those Mrs. Lovelace possesses.

In addition, they suggest that parents must recognize they have an obligation in carrying their share of the responsibility for developing good reading and study habits at home. They see themselves as role models in helping their son understand the value of education and the commitment he must make to progress successfully through school. We think this type of home-school relationship is characteristic of leader teams and parents who are implementing successful *Parents Sharing Books* programs in their schools and homes.

In Mr. Martin's opinion, parents must be willing to adapt to their personal situations so that the family continues to support their children's academic life. He states that life can get hectic and that we become involved in the hang-ups of everyday living, but parents have the ability to work through this. He suggests that parents must"plan" time to read and share with their children. Mr. Martin implies that"consistency" is important in establishing a family reading program. Mrs. Martin is aware that parents must take the lead in turning the TV off and initiating opportunities for enjoyable book-sharing. PSB staff members must highlight parent attitudes such as the Martins when providing training to leader teams that enables them to support parents in their efforts to establish reading habits at home.

Kevin, the Martins' son, is a polite, soft-spoken eighth grader in this urban neighborhood school. Kevin enjoys sports and plays in the school band. He is a typical middle-school youth, and like most children his age, he doesn't enjoy doing homework! Kevin supports his mother's statements about his dislike for reading. But he affirms his parents' belief that reading and developing study habits are things he must do, and together they can make it an enjoyable activity

at home. Because his mother and father took the first step in turning the TV off and reserving time to read with him, Kevin states that he enjoys this time together and can see the progress he is making.

Kevin competes in school and community sports, and he enjoys participating in band competitions. He acknowledges his father's praise about his fine performance at a band competition. He played a solo piece and shares with me that he was surprised, but pleased, with his performance. Kevin's parents support and offer praise for his accomplishments. This type of parent shows a genuine interest in a child's academic success and recognizes the value of investing additional time in parent involvement programs such as *Parents Sharing Books*.

Kevin's parents see an opportunity to help him improve his reading by becoming involved in the PSB program. By attending Mrs. Lovelace's meeting, they find out that they are able to key-in on Kevin's interest in sports as a way to get him involved with reading at home. They think Mrs. Lovelace's suggestion to pick something a child likes is another good way to get reluctant readers involved in reading at home. The Martins advocate that parents should "get into a sequence" of reading at home, pick something of interest for the child, read aloud, and make a point to share during "unique" situations. They are establishing activities and adapting to schedules so that reading is becoming an enjoyable family event in their home. These methods are working for them. We feel that their input is important for parents who may be thinking they do not have the time to read and share with their children.

Mrs. Martin: Mrs. Lovelace asked us to come today to talk to you about our involvement with *Parents Sharing Books*, and we were willing to help her out in anyway we could. She is a super person! We haven't been involved in the program that long. We are reading our first book, *The Contender*, and she asked us to come today. But we can share our experiences and attitudes about the program as much as we are able to.

Mrs. Lovelace is a great motivator! When she introduced us to the program and got us involved in it, she called us and invited us to come and talk about Kevin's progress at school. She thought with the progress he was showing at school and the *Parents Sharing Books* program she was doing with parents, we could work together at home as well as at school to help Kevin's progress.

Mr. Martin: She [Mrs. Lovelace] is good about keying in on people and her students. She knows what they are concerned with. And she was trying to involve us with Kevin's work and progress at school and knew that we are always interested in how he is doing. She invited us to come to the school and see Kevin's evaluation in the reading program he is involved in at school. Mrs. Lovelace called us and told us she would like to show us how he was progressing. Usually teachers invite you to come in and tell you something negative about your children. But to hear somebody say something positive about your child, even though he may be just average or below average, that makes you feel good. That even makes him [Kevin] feel good about himself.

Mrs. Martin: Our son doesn't like to read. So when Mrs. Lovelace called and asked us to be in *Parents Sharing Books* or try it, we said,"Sure." We are interested in Kevin's school work and want to support him as much as we can. Mrs. Lovelace encouraged us to do this and said we might learn something from the books we read that might help us to understand what Kevin is going through or might be affecting him...this [program] might help all of us.

By her [Mrs. Lovelace] letting us take that book home with us, we found out that the books are very interesting...we had fun doing it. Kevin and I sit down together and read a few pages. I read a few pages, and then he reads a few to me. If there are words he is reading that he doesn't understand, or sometimes I ask him if he knows what a word means and if he doesn't, then I encourage him to get the dictionary. I encourage him to look at the words so that he can find similar words to understand the word he doesn't know.

We are reading *The Contender* and the reason why we picked that book was because we knew that Kevin likes sports like baseball, basketball, football, but I didn't know that he likes boxing. This book is about boxing. His dad knows a lot about boxing, but I didn't at the time. When we are reading, there are words I may not know about, because I don't know about boxing, but his dad would know about them. I learned a lot about boxing that I didn't know before. I didn't even know Kevin liked boxing until we read this book, [but] I just knew he liked other sports. It made my husband notice that Kevin liked boxing, too. We found all this out when we read *The Contender*!

Mr. Martin: As a father, this is very interesting and it's just fun to do! What I mean by fun is that just to start reading as a family is fun. I think it's fun finding out what each person in the group knows; finding out that someone in your family doesn't know that the other person is interested in this type of reading; finding out that someone in your family knows a lot about a topic that you didn't know they did; or to see someone get interested in a book that you never thought they would be interested in is fun! Kevin has fun with this, too.

I work nights, and we call each other every night to talk. When we started reading *The Contender*, we would call each other and start talking about the book. Now that's what we talk about when I call every night. [Now] we are saying,"The book's good," or"What did you think about this part?" or"I liked this part. What did you think?"

Because I work at night, we try to have a plan. That's the only way any kind of situation is going to be successful. Even though I am away when Kevin and his mother read, we are still working on this together. We have this plan and do this sequence of reading and calling at night. I find that this way of reading together brings us together on the weekends. During the week, we worry about the day-to-day stresses. Weekends are more relaxed and we can "air-out," so to speak. Weekends are a good time for us to help him [Kevin] and get together with each other and enjoy catching up on the reading that was done that week.

Mrs. Martin: Kevin and I read together after he has his homework done. We turn off the TV, and he knows that part of it is hard to do! But as parents, we have to realize that we have to let go of the TV also and help our children with their reading. Sometimes we're just as bad. I have to be the one to turn off the TV. We have to be willing to let go ourselves. I can't expect Kevin to do it on his own if I'm not willing to do it, too. We do a good job of taking care of our kids' wants, and we need to be just as good at giving them the important things that they may not think are important...yet!

Reading is part of everything, and even though Kevin doesn't like to read, he will read with us because he knows that reading is important. It is part of spelling, math, and other subjects. It has something to do with or is related to everything. Kids may not know that, but, as parents, we know that and need to make sure that our children develop the habit of reading. Mrs. Lovelace

points this out to us when she says that reading is everything, too. She encourages us to give him [Kevin] newspapers, magazines, comic books, study materials, whatever; and we can read anywhere in order to let him get interested in reading.

We had to take some time out from reading together just before ISTEP tests. Kevin and I went over practice tests and things. It took time away from our reading together, but I realized then what Mrs. Lovelace is emphasizing to us when she says that reading is reading a lot of different materials, and it can be done anywhere. Now we make sure Kevin knows that reading can be done from the newspaper, *Sports Illustrated*, and my husband is always pointing out things to read while we're in the car. This emphasizes that you can read wherever you're at.

Mrs. Lovelace encourages us to get a library card. We're going to make sure we get a library card and use it during the summer to keep this habit up.

Because of the *Parents Sharing Books* program, I spend more time, [and] I make time now to spend with Kevin as far as reading goes. We have a good relationship, and I think this has encouraged him to want to do better in his reading. I listen to his reading now. I can help him and give him suggestions about reading clearly, slowing down, and pointing out punctuation that he should look for to help him slow down and make his reading clearer. Kevin comes to me now and asks,"Do I read better?" Each day I listen, and I can tell he's progressing more and more. Tell her about your reading class for Mrs. Lovelace, Kevin.

Kevin: I have a reading class with Mrs. Lovelace and we work every day on reading and the computer, and then we are reading at home. My class evaluation shows that I am improving. I'm going up in my vocabulary and getting a little better in comprehension. That makes me feel good.

Mr. Martin: This makes us see that it is important. I enjoy having Kevin read aloud. I think when I have him read aloud to me then I know he is reading. If you send a child off to read, he may not read. This way I know Kevin is reading, he's getting the words, and he's understanding what he reads, [and] he's getting the comprehension. That's my method. I like to hear him read out loud.

I would like to see a larger variety of books that we can choose from the PSB Bookshelf. Maybe we could survey the parents here [at Tolleston] or in other schools like ours to see what everybody likes to read and then make sure the demand is met. It's hard satisfying everybody's interests, but that's how you start getting someone interested in reading. That's where we started with Kevin. We knew Kevin liked sports, so that's the kind of book we picked out when Mrs. Lovelace showed us the books. By getting them interested in something, hopefully you can get them interested in reading.

I believe the PSB concept is excellent because it's trying to motivate the parents to get into what children's language and reading should be. They [PSB] have a great concept. Communication is one of the benefits that enlightens you to be a better communicator. I think it's an excellent program, because I can see what it has done for me. It has enlightened me. It's made me see that I need to read much more often and that I set the environment for Kevin. I already knew that I liked to read and I still like to read the same type of literature, but I needed to keep a positive attitude about what others like to read and learn how to adapt to other people's things that they like to read, especially in my own family.

Mrs. Lovelace is superb at getting children motivated. She's very good with kids and with parents. You've got the right person for your program. I've only met her about four or five times; talked to her a couple of times on the phone. But if she motivates the kids as well as she has motivated me, she's doing an excellent job. She has the key for knowing what people are concerned with and what not. It takes a special person to take or make something that could have been a negative thing and have the people involved come away with a positive feeling.

She shows that she cares about our children. That's very professional. Mrs. Lovelace has a way of involving parents. When new parents come to *Parents Sharing Books*, she introduces them to everyone and takes the time to talk to each of us individually.

It takes people and programs like this to make others more aware that education is the kids' future. *Parents Sharing Books* and people like Mrs. Lovelace are helping to do that. We [parents] need to do our part, and the kids must understand that they must do their part, too. Together we can come away with good things.

The Kinnetts' Story

Overview: Mrs. Kinnett describes her son, J.R., as being 'very goal oriented.' She says that "When he was six years old, he decided he wanted to be a black belt in karate by the time he was eight, and he did it. He started lessons at age six and had his black belt the weekend he turned eight! J.R. approaches reading and PSB the same way. When he decides to do something, there's no halfway for it. He goes all the way and does it."

J.R. is an avid reader. He participates in any kind of reading contest or marathon his school offers. As evidence of his enthusiasm for reading, J.R. relates to me that during one 9-week grading period, he read around 5000 pages. He admits that he goes on binges with his reading. At one time, reading mysteries was J.R.'s indulgence. Now he is into science fiction, and when I ask him about his reading interests, J.R. rattles off favorite authors and titles without hesitation.

Even though J.R.'s reading interests and abilities are very sophisticated for a middle-schooler, he is able to empathize with students who don't particularly enjoy reading. J.R. articulates his insights about motivating students his age to read."You can't force anybody to read, and I just don't think it's right to force someone to read something they don't like. You'll never get them to like reading then! You've got to try to find out what they are interested in—sports, hobbies, TV programs, or whatever you can think of to find out what they like. Then you try to find a book that can fit their interests. And having someone to do this [reading] with helps."

J.R. has added interests and activities that are typical for children this age. His numerous activities and interests remind us of the energy level of this age group."I'm doing baseball. I am into Boy Scouts, and I'm doing Site Base [this is a student, teacher, and parent group for school improvement], and *Parents Sharing Books* here at school. I am in the play and track. Play practice and a track meet were on the same day, so it gets hectic. Sometimes I have to decide which one it is going to be."

J.R.'s mother and Mrs. Klinge [the PSB leader and J.R.'s S.T.A.R. teacher] agree that J.R. is a 'very social person.' Mrs. Kinnett comments that "the idea of joining a group and being part of this group is very appealing to J.R. This group is so accepting of J.R." J.R. brought a large stack of books to the first PSB meeting. Mrs. Klinge describes this display of leadership as something"only J.R. would think of doing." Mrs. Klinge speaks highly of J.R.'s contributions to her PSB group. "When J.R. brought those books in to share with the others in the group, he pulled it off with so much class. This was something that only J.R. would do. J.R. is a very bright boy, but not a boastful child. J.R. likes books, and he always has a lot of them around him. Mrs. Klinge describes this display of leadership as a way of sharing his interests with others. The kids know he likes to read. He doesn't brag about it, but he's not ashamed of it either. He is such a good example to have involved in this group. J.R. is an example to our group that if you read at home and have set an example for your children and show them that reading is something important, then children will read."

Mrs. Kinnett says that she and her husband have always thought that reading was very important, and they have read to their children from the beginning. But she admits that participation in PSB has been a learning experience for her. She comments that her own reading

has changed and that she doesn't read as much for enjoyment as she has in the past. "Most of my reading now is work-related and I read magazines and the newspaper. When you get away from this kind of reading [for enjoyment], it's almost like you have to re-learn, too. It's not quite as easy to sit down and pick up a book. I had to learn how to enjoy this again. When parents understand this, they can understand what their own children are going through and be more helpful to them. This [PSB] program helps to motivate parents and children, and it shows them how enjoyable it can be to do something like this together."

Mrs. Kinnett: J.R. is very social. He's kind of a joiner! He likes to get involved with a lot of different things, and he likes Mrs. Klinge a lot. She is his S.T.A.R. teacher, and she made an announcement about PSB in this class. He likes the idea of meetings and sharing and doing things like this. *Parents Sharing Books* offers all of this and the reading that he enjoys doing.

J.R.: A S.T.A.R. group is like in the morning when you have one of the teachers for sixth grade or a teacher from the sixth grade team. Your S.T.A.R. teacher is like an advisor, and each morning students meet with this teacher to talk over problems and things like that. Sixth grade students meet with S.T.A.R. teachers for about 20 minutes in the morning. There are only twelve to thirteen students in a group.

I got to know Mrs. Klinge because she is my S.T.A.R. teacher. She's probably one of my favorite teachers. She's nice and has a good personality. I like her for those aspects. Mrs. Klinge is involved with a lot of things, and she gets you involved with a lot of things, too. That's how I got involved in PSB.

Mrs. Kinnett: J.R. brought the flyer home about PSB and said he would like to do it. I've been involved in other activities [parent on task force for school restructuring] at the school, but this is the first time that J.R. and I have done something together like this.

The program itself intrigued me. It was kind of a different aspect than what I expected at first. Usually you send the books home with the kids and they read them and then maybe tell you about the books. I thought that it was a neat twist to have parents and children actually read and share the same book.

We had gotten away from reading with J.R. He has always been an avid reader. Every reading competition available, J.R. has always done them! And he's a good reader. Many times we encourage him to read to his younger brothers [who are five and ten]. Since J.R. has gotten older, the books that he enjoys reading are more difficult to read aloud and maybe in some respects more difficult for his younger brothers to enjoy. He reads a lot of science fiction and fantasy type books. Consequently J.R. reads more by himself, and occasionally he reads to his brothers when the choices are easier to read.

J.R.: We did the program a little differently than some of the other parents. We started out reading together as a whole family. Dad usually reads the longest because his voice lasts longer.

Mrs. Kinnett: It's been a great 'family affair' for us! Jim [husband] does most of the reading, and the four of us sit around together and listen to the story. We've got two green rocking chairs that Jim and I sit in, J.R. is usually on the couch, and the two little brothers wrap up in a blanket on the floor. It feels like the old time days around radio or something! Then it got to the point [in

our family reading sessions] where Neil [the five-year-old] would fall asleep every night while we were reading the book, so we started reading upstairs. We didn't have to carry Neil so far!

We started out with *The Hobbitt*. And we liked it so well that we continued to read the second book in the trilogy. Because there is such an age range and *The Hobbit* was so enjoyable for all of us, we thought this type of series would be successful for us, too. We were pretty sure everyone would enjoy it since we liked the first one so much!

J.R.: I mostly like reading science fiction books. I've been into science fiction for around three years. Before that I was into mysteries. Probably my favorite science fiction authors are David Eddings and Terry Brooks. They both have a series of books, and I have read most of them.

I didn't read too many books from the PSB Bookshelf. I had read quite a few of the books already, but I hadn't read them all. We picked *The Hobbit*, and one of the reasons I wanted to read it was because it was big.

I really didn't want to read any of the books on the PSB Bookshelf because they were the smaller books. I like reading big books; long books where you can get yourself caught up into them.

Mrs. Kinnett: Our reading interests are very different. But I decided that I would read what interested J.R. Most of my reading now is more technical or work-related and magazines and the newspaper. I don't get a lot of time just to sit down and actually read a book.

I had read *The Hobbit* when I was younger, and I enjoyed it then. It had been such a long time since I had read it that it was like reading it for the first time. Jim's [my husband's] reading interests are very different. He enjoys anything he can get his hands on about the Civil War.

J.R.: Personally I think that [Civil War] is pretty boring, but he reads some big ones! I think my dad enjoyed *The Hobbit*, too. He always acts like he doesn't like those kinds of books, but I think he really did like reading *The Hobbit*. He just didn't want to admit it!

Mrs. Kinnett: J.R. is probably right about this! The trilogy starts out pretty slow, and Jim must do some traveling for his job. He was gone for a week and we started the second book in the trilogy without him. He probably missed out on the first couple of chapters, and he got mad because we started without him!

J.R.: When Mom and I first started this, my dad really wasn't involved in it. My two brothers just started listening to *The Hobbit* as we were reading together. Dad got involved by accident, or I should say by sickness!

Mrs. Kinnett: Before we did this [PSB], nobody could have ever convinced me that families could sit down and read a book together. You just couldn't have convinced me that we could pull something like this off!

It didn't start out to be this 'family' thing with us; it just happened! J.R. and I started to read and then Sean [our ten-year-old son] said he wanted to listen. And Neil [our five-year-old son] didn't want to be left out, so he joined us, too! I don't think Neil understood everything. He

usually lasts 10 or 15 minutes to half an hour and then he falls asleep. But he still comes back the next night and wants to listen even though he might miss half of the story the night before! I don't think he cares if he gets caught up with the book or that he gets bits and pieces of the story. Neal considers it a family thing; he is part of the family, and he just wants to be there with us.

Jim [my husband] happened to get involved, because I caught a cold and couldn't read so he took over! This entire 'family' thing just sort of evolved. It wasn't a planned family event at all, but it did work out that way!

J.R.: That's true. I mean when you think about the age difference in our family. There is almost 10 years' difference between my little brother and me. So it's kind of like our interests range from *Little Red Riding Hood* to big 700 page novels! So I think if we can do it, anybody can do it as a family.

Mrs. Kinnett: When you think about the range of ages, interests, and other activities we have going on, other families can make this work, too. Our boys are involved in a lot of things, both Jim and I work, and Jim has a lot of board meetings. We have a very hectic lifestyle, but we had to make time to do this [PSB]. And some days it was impossible to get the reading in!

J.R.: We usually read later at night when homework is finished and everybody is ready to listen. We read around eight to nine o'clock.

Mrs. Kinnett: We started off with short chunks of time. It started out maybe 15 minutes before we went to bed. Since we started with *The Hobbit*, we read about a half a chapter a night at the very beginning.

J.R.: Yeah, we started out in small chunks, but as we got more interested in the book we started going longer and longer. Sometimes we read an hour to an hour and a half!

Mrs. Kinnett: Towards the end of the book we were really getting into it. In fact, there were a couple of nights that Jim read, and his voice wore out. We were at an exciting part, so then I took over.

J.R.: And then I took over sometimes!

Mrs. Kinnett: We took turns depending on how long we read. Most of the time Jim read it, but sometimes I would read, and then we'd turn it over to J.R., depending on how exciting the chapter was.

We don't read every night. There just isn't tne time to do it every night with the other activities that we are involved with. Wednesdays and Fridays are out, because we have too many other things going on. When we first started *The Hobbit*, we probably read two nights a week and towards the end we were probably reading three to four nights a week.

I think you have to be realistic about doing this. We knew that our schedules wouldn't allow us to read every night. We knew from the very beginning that we had other activities that we enjoy doing just as much as we enjoy the reading. We weren't going to give those things up, but we did have to think about when we could sit down and read together.

We began by slotting in 2 or 3 times during the week to read together. It's easy to find the time and increase your reading time when a book gets interesting, and I think our book selection helped to get us started with this family reading.

J.R.: One night we went real long. That was on a Friday or Saturday night, because we knew we didn't have to get up the next morning. And then we started doing things faster so that we'd have time to read at night!

Mrs. Kinnett: This is something that the kids really enjoy, so it is easy to make time for this. Before we started sharing books, it sometimes took the boys two hours to get ready for bed, or homework might drag on for hours! Now we tell them to hurry up or we'll start without them. It's funny how this reading together has improved other points in our life! When they want to read, these activities can disappear pretty fast!

J.R.: We've always been a pretty open family. I don't think our communication has improved or changed. I don't always agree with my mom and dad, but I can always come to them about things that I'm interested in or concerned about. We even get in arguments sometimes, but most of the time we get along. They do stuff for me, and I do stuff for them. A lot of times we're pretty good, but there are times when it's not.

Mrs. Kinnett: I think that we have real good communication in our family. We've tried pretty hard to make the kids important in the family. I think they feel they can come and talk to us. Sometimes I'll just go in and sit down on the bed and ask them how things are going. Sometimes giving them a chance to talk and giving them your attention without making them ask for it lets them know that you're there when they need you. There are times when things are going okay and our conversations don't last long, but at least they know we are interested in what is going on with them.

We have always made time to read to the children when they were young. I think reading together from the very beginning has a lot to do with the attitudes we have now as a family. The fact that we'll read a book and just sit and talk a little bit about it encourages other kinds of chit-chat that can evolve into other conversations. I do think there is some truth that sharing books with your children keeps the lines of communication open. Even as adults, when you share a book you are reading with another person, the conversation easily moves into talking about the issues or problems or situations in the book that are relevant to the readers.

J.R.: I think it probably helps family relationships. It gets two people in your family or a whole family of individuals together in one place at one time; and you are doing something together. If your family is so busy that they don't have a whole lot of time to do anything together as a whole group, it [PSB] gets you together and you can do something all together.

I'm not saying that my family is so busy that we don't have time for each other, but if there are families who feel this way then this [PSB] can help you do things together. I think this helps a lot.

I enjoy the reading part of PSB more than I do the meetings, although the meetings are okay, too. At the meetings we talk about the books we are reading. Mrs. Klinge does a lot of sharing

with us about the books she likes to read. And she brings in books that she enjoyed reading when she was our age.

Mrs. Kinnett: It was interesting to talk to others about their own reading and how they manage to share books together. I guess when we [the Kinnett family] were starting to read, and we were all sitting around listening to the story [of *The Hobbit*], it just didn't seem like any big deal. We were just reading the book. But then when we go to the [PSB] meetings, we share what we are doing, and we kind of realize that 'Hey gee, I guess everybody doesn't get five people to sit down together.' And then you begin to ask yourself, 'How did we do this?' After going to the meetings, we realized that we had really accomplished something other than just sitting down and reading! I guess it made it seem a little more important after we shared it with other people what we were able to do. What we accomplished was appreciated more when we were able to hear others talk about how difficult it was for some of them to share with only one child.

J.R.: The fact that I love to read so much helped us do it together. I know there are kids in our group who don't like to read or maybe aren't the best readers, but they wanted to be in this [PSB] group. They couldn't get their parents to do PSB, so one of our teachers did it with them. She came to the meetings and read with these boys, and I know they enjoyed it. Mrs. Bourne [an instructional assistant who did PSB with these two boys] probably was good at helping them find things they were interested in, and just having someone do it with them probably helped a lot.

Then there is another kid in our group that likes it [PSB]. He went through it twice—both times! I know he enjoyed it.

Mrs. Kinnett: I think one thing that's been interesting about this experience is that you realize how much we depend on TV for entertainment. We forget to listen and use our imaginations. The reading and sharing brought all that back for me.

Endnotes: Comments from J.R.'s and Mrs. Kinnett's PSB Leader

Mrs. Klinge is the PSB leader at Hibberd Middle School. Mrs. Klinge's interest in the PSB program is reflected in the way she talks about J.R., Mrs. Kinnett, and other parents who participate in her PSB group. During our conversation, Mrs. Klinge comments several times about J.R.'s leadership qualities, and speaks highly of J.R.'s role in motivating others in their PSB group. She feels that J.R."brought something special" to her *Parents Sharing Books* program. J.R. and his mother don't highlight this in their story as well as Mrs. Klinge does when she talks about J.R.

Mrs. Klinge emphasizes the importance of having a diversity of parents in a PSB group. J.R. and his mother do not give us the impression that they see themselves as role models for others in this group. They only speak of their personal benefits from the program. On the other hand, Mrs. Klinge implies that parents are learning from families like the Kinnetts who are participating in *Parents Sharing Books*. Mrs. Klinge likes the mixture of different parent backgrounds and family reading habits, and she appreciates that parents are able to provide excellent role models for others in the PSB group.

Mrs. Klinge: I realize that I add my own little touches to make the program mine. I love teaching, I enjoy being around the students, and working with these parents is just as enjoyable. I hope that comes through when I meet with parents. I don't feel that this is something I HAVE to do. I choose to do this program.

I enjoy bringing books to the meetings that I have read and like sharing with the group what I enjoy reading. This [ideas of bringing in my favorite books] has worked well. After I brought books in to share, J.R. did the same thing at our next meetings. It was such a natural thing for him to do. He loves to read, and it is his way of sharing with the others what he likes to read.

The students in the group respond to him [bringing in his favorite books]. They know J.R. well enough to realize that he truly wants to share his books and his reading interests. He does it so matter-of-factly that no one in the group thinks anything about it. J.R. probably does as much for the group and getting them excited about reading as the other activities we do!

Students are included in our meetings. We enjoy mixing parents and students. When you have students like J.R. that other students in the group respond well to, you begin to realize the qualities that students bring to a group such as this. I didn't plan it this way; it just worked out this way! The students are a very positive addition to this group.

J.R. and his mother are good models for other parents in the group. They are a very busy family, and their children range from kindergarten to middle school. J.R. and his mother didn't find a lot of reading materials that they were interested in reading on the PSB Bookshelf. They didn't draw attention to this, but instead they chose to go outside the PSB Bookshelf to find books that meet their reading interests. When Mrs. Kinnett and J.R. chose books from other resources, they showed other parents that they can expand their resources for finding books.

I notice that parents in our group are beginning to make their book selections from other places besides just the PSB Bookshelf. I am glad to see this happening; it shows me they are becoming more confident in selecting their books.

APPENDIX N:
PSB Informed Parents About Reading and Adolescents

Some parents' and children's stories implied that participating in PSB was a 'learning experience' for them. They talked about reading adolescent books, and indicated that participating in PSB provided them an opportunity to become more informed about books their children were reading. Sharing books with their children helped parents to understand some of the problems and situations their children were facing as adolescents today. Parents and children talked about the books they shared at home and how they did the sharing. Some children commented about how surprised, but excited, they were that their parents wanted to read the same books they were reading at this age.

The Shlemeyers' Story

Overview: When I ask Wendy Shlemeyer how she got her mother involved in the school's *Parents Sharing Books* program, Wendy quickly gives credit where credit is due: "Actually, she got me involved!" is her response. A brief announcement for parents at Creston's seventh-grade orientation sparked Mrs. Shlemeyer's interest in PSB: "Mrs. Bova briefly explained PSB and told us to look for information about this program that would be sent home with the students. I asked Mrs. Bova a few times when I was at school about the program to make sure I hadn't missed anything. It just sounded like a program that Wendy would enjoy. She likes to read, and I thought it could be one more thing for us to do together."

Mrs. Shlemeyer feels that PSB provides parents with an opportunity to interact with one another, and to get to know other parents who are coming into a new and large school setting. This particular PSB group keeps parents informed about things going on in their children's school, and parents are encouraged to ask questions about concerns they have.

Mrs. Shlemeyer uses the word "weird" to describe the relationship that she and her daughter Wendy have. She elaborates on this description by explaining that parents in her PSB group often discuss the difficulties they experience getting their children at this age to do things with them. Mrs. Shlemeyer comments that parents frequently say, 'My daughter won't go near the same books that I'm reading,' or 'They don't tell me anything that is going on at school,' or 'My child doesn't want me to go to school things,' or 'My child wouldn't dream of doing anything with me.' But Mrs. Shlemeyer explains: "Wendy and I don't experience any of this. Wendy has never indicated that 'she would just die' if I came to school! Wendy and I enjoy doing a lot of things together. I've always been involved in my two children's schools. If Wendy told me not to be involved, I'd probably see that as a reason to become more involved! I'd want to know why she didn't want me at school or want me to be interested in what was going on at school! Wendy and I have talked about my being so involved with things at school, and I think Wendy would tell me if it bothered her."

Mrs. Shlemeyer has a close relationship with Wendy and recognizes that PSB really hasn't changed their mother and daughter relationship. The book sharing "seemed like a natural extension" for some of the things they already enjoy doing together. However, she is aware of the benefits that PSB might have offered her son when he was Wendy's age."He's not comfortable with my being involved with his school activities. Even though I haven't shared this same experience [PSB] with him, I think I understand him a little bit better by having this [PSB] opportunity to become involved in reading adolescent books. I think we could have really benefitted from a program like this when he was in junior high."

In the Shlemeyers' case, PSB hasn't increased Mrs. Shlemeyer's participation in Wendy's education. Mrs. Shlemeyer acknowledges her long-term commitment to being involved with her children's school life as one of the reasons Wendy is so accepting of her participation in PSB. Mrs. Shlemeyer also shares that her own parents were not very involved in her school activities when she was a child, and she says that she wants to change that for her own children: "Wendy isn't bothered by my helping out at school or getting involved in parent activities. She is very comfortable with it. I think this arrangement has worked for us because I give Wendy her space. I'm not at school to draw attention to Wendy or myself. I'm very careful that I don't embarrass

my children in any way when I do get involved in school activities. I'm here to help and learn more about things that can benefit my children."

Mrs. Shlemeyer offers sound advice for leaders who need to select a PSB meeting place; she speaks from a parent's point of view. Mrs. Shlemeyer thinks that even though holding PSB meetings away from the school setting may offer a more relaxed atmosphere for some leaders and parents, leaders should take precautions when arranging such meeting places so that all interested parents feel welcome. Incidents should not occur that might discourage parents from attending more PSB meetings.

Mrs. Shlemeyer: That's been one thing nice about the *Parents Sharing Books* program; it has helped parents get to know each other. Creston is a very large school, and there are five different schools coming together to form this junior high school. Wendy comes home and talks about kids I don't know. That's quite a realization for parents who have been involved with the smaller elementary school and have known practically all of the parents. PSB gave me a chance to get to know some of the other kids' parents. A lot of times when you get to know the parents, you understand the kids more. I've really enjoyed being able to talk to some of the parents.

Mrs. Bova does this program with students in her classes. I've talked to parents whose children aren't in her class, and they don't seem to know anything about this program. It's too bad more teachers don't get involved so that more parents could benefit from it. It would be nice if each block [group or team of teachers] could have a PSB group so that every seventh-grade parent has an opportunity to participate.

I think the secret to our success has been Mrs. Bova. She is very enthusiastic about this program. She is just a powerhouse at getting things done. I think when teachers show their interest in something, parents are easily drawn into it. I've been to school meetings and activities, and it clearly shows if a teacher is involved because they have been told they have to be involved. Mrs. Bova shows that she likes what she is doing, and she is able to share this enthusiasm with parents. The key is getting teachers who want to do this program.

Mrs. Bova figured out how to get parents involved by sort of "baiting" them. She offers extra credit to children whose parents attend these meetings. I'm not bothered by this if this is what it takes to get parents involved. Mrs. Bova encourages kids to read and write in her classroom, and this is what she wants parents to do at home, too.

This program dovetails with what she is doing in the classroom. They read a lot in her class, and she wants them to share this reading with us [their parents]. They also write a lot in her class, and she encourages us to write in our children's dialogue journals about the books we are reading together. She really is not asking a lot from us; just our time.

Wendy: I enjoy the program [PSB] because it gives me an opportunity to read types of books that I've never read before. I like reading books that have sequels or that are part of a series. I enjoy reading books about personal problems and mysteries.

I think that a lot of the kids in my class are into books like *Izzy Willie Nilly*. It's about this girl who was in a car accident. She was hit by a drunk driver, and she has to have her leg

amputated. The book is about how she deals with this problem at school. I like books that deal with problems that you may be having in school—like making new friends and losing old friends.

Sometimes you feel like you are all alone when you come to a new school. I felt this way when I started junior high. My two best friends didn't come here. One of them went to a parochial school, and the other one moved away. I was pretty much on my own when I came to Creston.

Mrs. Shlemeyer: I hadn't read much adolescent literature until Wendy and I got started with PSB. I read the synopsis or the back of the cover when I'm trying to pick books for Wendy, but I've never taken the time to read them all the way through until this [PSB] opportunity came along.

I'm glad that I began to read books at her level, because now I can understand why some of them are difficult to get through and why others are very easy to sit down and read. Wendy and I found out that our likes or interests are somewhat different from other parents in the group. Parents in our PSB group would recommend particular books that Wendy and I just didn't think were that great. It makes you understand how reading interests and tastes are very personal and reflect the individual concerned.

Wendy: My mom and I don't share the reading part of it. We each read the book on our own, and then we talk about it when we are together. Mom usually reads the book at night after I have gone to bed. We are in the car a lot after school, and we talk about what we read while we are in the car and other places we go together.

My mom is pretty good at picking books out for me. Usually she reads the book first and then she says,"Oh, this is a good book." I like knowing if the book is going to be good. I don't quit books once I have started them. I always think they will get better, but sometimes they don't. My mom's suggestions are helpful.

Mrs. Shlemeyer: Mrs. Bova recommends a lot of books to us. Many of the books she recommends are about kids who are having problems. If they are about problems that I'm not experiencing, they don't interest me. I don't want to read about kids going through divorce, or on drugs, or being sexually abused. These things don't relate to my life. I need titles that relate to some of the problems I'm facing.

I'd like to see some variety in the book titles from the PSB Bookshelf. A lot of times I would go to the meetings, and I would have a hard time finding something to read. Some of the books I had already read, and others on the shelf just didn't interest me. I would just get books from the library or our home library to find something that interested me.

I can pick books out for Wendy. She and I have the same tastes in books. I can remember reading types of books when I was her age that she is interested in reading now at this same age. She is also good about recommending books to me that she thinks I would enjoy. One book that we read and liked so well was *Middle School Blues*. It wasn't on the PSB Bookshelf, but we found it somewhere else.

Parents share at the meetings what they are reading at home with their children. It is always helpful to hear what other parents are saying about books. At each meeting, Mrs. Bova talks about some aspect of adolescence, what to expect, and some suggestions for handling these situations. I know that helps a lot, especially for parents who have children going through this [adolescent stage] for the first time. Many times our conversations move to talking about things that are happening at school. I think it's always a good idea to get parents together to talk about their concerns and how they are feeling about things that are going on at school.

I know our school was having some problems at the beginning of the year—racial problems. Our PSB meetings gave us a chance to talk about these situations and to be informed about what was actually going on. The PSB meetings allowed us to share some things and ask questions about our children's safety at school.

Being a part of PSB was a very natural thing for me to do. I have always volunteered for things in my children's school. Wendy handles it very well. I guess I don't crowd her, and for her it must feel like a natural thing having her mom in and out of the school. Wendy's a lot like I was at her age, and I remember what it was like to be her age. I understand students don't want to be embarrassed by their parents, and when I'm at school I try not to do things that might draw attention to my being at school.

I realize that I probably have a unique situation; I am able to volunteer to do things at school. But PSB has given parents the opportunity to become involved with their children's education in a very convenient manner. Our PSB meetings are held when most parents can attend them. Mrs. Bova lets us know well in advance when the meetings are so that parents can make arrangements to come. We do have some parents who can't come to meetings because of transportation, but Mrs. Bova has even encouraged the dialogue journal as a way for them to be part of this sharing experience with their children.

Our parent meetings are held outside the school. I think having our meetings at Laughner's has some good points and bad points. It is more relaxed, but I personally feel uncomfortable going into a place where I feel like I should buy something to eat while I'm there. One night interested people were sent away because a worker told them they were in the wrong place. One person in that group came back to our next meeting and shared this with us, but the other person never came back. You don't want to hear about parents being turned away. We may never get that parent back to another parent-involvement function.

If groups continue to meet in places like this, precautions need to be taken by leaders and management of the facility so that people are welcomed when entering these places. Even a sign in the lobby to let people know they are in the right place would be helpful. Then they feel more comfortable asking for directions to the meeting room or area. It's incidents like this that discourage parents from being involved in school activities. These 'little' incidents may result in significant differences or outcomes for kids.

The Jesters' Story

Overview: "Pink. Yes, definitely pink would describe the relationship my mom and I have." Why pink? Becky says pink reminds her of cheerfulness. Becky's mother humorously responds, "What shade of pink?" And both of them spring into laughter before Becky gets a chance to come back with a response!

Becky and her mother are both avid readers, but this is the first time Mrs. Jester has picked up books that Becky is interested in reading. She says,"I've learned a lot from these books about Becky and other children her age. I think it's my responsibility as a parent to keep informed about things that are happening or can happen with my child at this age."

The PSB meetings have been another source of information for Mrs. Jester. At these meetings, parents share some of the problems their children are having, and Mrs. Bova talks about things that are going on at school. Mrs. Jester says she listens to other parents talk about books they are reading and receives additional ideas for Becky's and her own reading interests; "It's just a great program and I feel that parents who don't take advantage of it are missing out on a neat experience with their children. I think this is something Becky and I can enjoy together and benefit from the rest of our lives. This isn't just a program where you share books. You develop honesty, respect, and concern for thoughts and ideas."

Mrs. Jester: *Parents Sharing Books* gives Becky and me something in common. It's nice, with busy schedules and having three children, to sit down and read with your oldest child.

It's been fun in the sense that it has surprised me about some of the reading that kids have available to them. It's been fun to get so involved with the books we have read that we really get upset or irritated or even laugh till tears appear on our faces. It gives us something in common that we can enjoy together.

Becky is involved in a lot of things, and I'm one of these super-involved parents. We have a daughter in elementary and one in pre-school. Becky is at the junior high this year and I try to share time with everybody. Time is valuable, but we have just taken the time to do PSB because we think we can benefit from it.

I could easily include Sarah [ten-year-old daughter] in this, but I want this to be just for Becky and me. The neighbors probably see the light on until sometimes eleven or twelve o'clock at night and wonder what's going on over here. We both love to read!

Becky: I bring books home from school and she [Mom] gets some at the meetings. We both pick different types of books so it's been fun to see what Mom picks out. We start reading at the same time, but I know I finish way before Mom.

Mrs. Jester: This is a situation where Becky comes to me and says "Have you done your reading" or "Aren't you finished with that yet!" She's always asking me "Where are you in the book? You'll love this next part!" She will come home from school and share something from a book that she is reading in class. Becky will say, "Oh, Mom, you've got to read this! It's really good!" It's been fun to be included in excitement like this.

Becky: We usually read on our own and then talk about the book. We have a dialogue journal, and I always write to my mom in it. I'm always asking her, "How are you doing?" This has been fun to do!

I couldn't believe that my mom would really like the books that I like to read. Probably one of the best books we read together was *Izzy Willie Nilly*. But I liked *Fallen Angels*, too. I tried to get my Uncle Bob interested in that book because he was in Vietnam. But he's pretty busy, and I don't think he ever got around to it.

Mrs. Jester: I would probably have to agree with Becky that *Izzy Willie Nilly* was my favorite, too. I liked all the different lessons that it taught about prejudices and friends. In this story, the main character thought that her best friends would all remain her best friends after her accident. It was Rosamunde, the "plump and not-so-well dressed" girl, who became her real friend after the accident. When it came time to really be a friend, the others weren't there. There were lessons in this book about people and friends and real-life situations and circumstances that I liked—drinking, peer pressure, cliques, and all sorts of things Becky and other kids her age are faced with today.

I'm learning a lot from our reading. We really got into *Fallen Angels*. The language is very harsh in this book, and it exposes some cold hard facts about that war. Our family understands that others use this kind of language. We've heard this kind of language used, but we don't use this kind of language at home. There are things in life that you are exposed to that you have to learn to live with. We are able to overlook the language in these books, because I think there are some valuable lessons to be learned from books like this.

I think parents have to keep themselves informed about what's going on with kids in general. I am surprised at some of the things in these books, but now I know what Becky is up against. I think I understand Becky a little bit better just because these books we are sharing are teaching me about things that children are going through today.

Becky: Mom brought a book home one time that we really didn't like. It was called *The Bear's House*. I told Mom about Mrs. Bova's suggestion for books like this. She told us to just "ditch'em."

Mrs. Jester: I like that philosophy. I think when I was growing up, we didn't have an opportunity to pick books that we wanted to read in class. Our classroom reading was required and we had to finish the book, regardless of whether we liked it or not. I can appreciate Becky's choice to "ditch" it. It was a good book, but it would be a better book for Sarah, my ten-year-old, to read.

Becky: I think I know my mom a little bit better than I did before sharing books with her. My mom and I get along, but it is different now. We sit down and talk about some very important things about growing up and other life situations. We talked about some of those things once in awhile, but we definitely talk more since being in *Parents Sharing Books*.

I know what she likes and what she expects of me. We talk about drinking and all that. She lays it out pretty clear when we talk, but I know that the choices and decisions will be my responsibility.

Mrs. Jester: I try to give my kids responsibilities. They know how I feel about certain things and I offer my opinions. But at the same time, I realize that the final choice is theirs. And as a parent, you hope they make the right choice.

While Becky and I have been doing this program, we have tried to accomplish being more honest with each other. I think honesty is so important during this time for Becky. I think we do talk more, and I am learning to open up with Becky. I say things to her that probably surprise her. I feel more comfortable saying these things during our book conversations, whereas before I was at a loss as to how to bring up these topics. Now we talk about our feelings and responses, and we ask each other a lot more about what the other one is thinking and feeling.

Becky: I'm glad my mom and I can talk. I feel more secure, and I know she is there when I need to talk. I think she has learned what it is like going to school today. I hope we can go on reading books together.

I'd probably tell my friends how much fun PSB has been for my mom and me. You open up more and all that. I'd tell them that they are really missing out on something that's fun to do with your mom.

Cathy Arney's and Sandra Wilson's Story

Overview: Cathy Arney and Sandra Wilson are parents who participate in the Owen Valley Middle School PSB program. Their daughters are sixth graders at the middle school. Cathy and Sandra like to read and feel that PSB is an opportunity for them to share this interest with their children.

These mothers indicate that moving from a small elementary setting, "where everyone knows your name and your child," to a large middle-school setting was a concern for them. They wanted to make sure their children's transition from elementary school to middle school was a positive experience, and they wanted to maintain their involvement in their children's schooling. Cathy Arney shares that participating in PSB allows her to show her daughter Casey that she wants to continue to build strong family relations: "This [PSB] lets Casey know that I still want to be involved with her and her school. Just because she moves into the middle school doesn't mean that we can't still do mom and daughter things together."

Cathy's and Sandra's stories provide suggestions about how parents might share books with their children. These parents find that their busy schedules don't always provide them the time to sit and read with their daughters, but their insistence on spending time with their children helps them to find a suitable approach to their situations. Their daughters usually read at school when they have some free moments, and Cathy and Sandra read the same book after school or at night. Cathy and her daughter Casey typically share in the morning just before school. Sandra and her daughter Jessica usually share in the evening around bedtime. What Cathy and Sandra like about this approach is that it allows Casey and Jessica an opportunity to 'take the lead' in reading; they are deciding when they can read and how much they are reading. Both mothers realize that Casey's and Jessica's interest in reading allows them to treat the reading in this manner.

Cathy and Sandra reveal that they have learned a great deal about their children, and comment how their mother/daughter relationships have changed because of their PSB experience. Cathy shares how she uses book-sharing experiences to communicate values and beliefs to their children. She talks frankly about her reactions to some of the language and topics that are used in books she and Casey are reading: "We don't use that kind of language in our home and I wasn't too sure I wanted Casey to be exposed to some of these things that are in adolescent books. But reading about it in books gave us an opportunity to talk about it and discuss how we would handle situations like this. I have so much respect for Casey after listening to her talk about these things." Sandra is also aware that Jessica is interested in teenage activities and situations that are advanced for her age, but remarks, "We are reading about real things that go on in life. It keeps me current with what is going on in Jessica's life, and we are learning to let each other know what the other one is thinking."

Mrs. Arney: I read the literature about middle-school years being a time when it's hard to communicate with your child; it's a time when children grow away from their parents. PSB was suggested as a way of keeping the communication lines open.

Mrs. Wilson: Both of us picked up the information at an open house. It was the first table I saw when I walked in! Mrs. Staley just mentioned that if your child likes to read or you like to read or want to read more, then this might be a good program for you. She wasn't pushy; just friendly

and enthusiastic. I picked up the literature and read it once I got home. I picked up the phone and called her [Mrs. Staley] and told her that we'd [Mrs. Wilson and Jessica] like to be involved in this program.

I like to read, and my daughter Jessica likes to read. We [Mrs. Arney and Mrs. Wilson] live far away from Owen Valley Middle School; probably 15 miles from the school. Our kids are very far away from us when they go off to school. I thought PSB gave me an opportunity to come to the school and be a part of the school my daughter goes to.

We are the only parents from our area that are in the program. There were several parents from our area that signed up, but they never came to any of the meetings. I don't know why; maybe the transportation and distance to and from school is a problem.

Mrs. Arney: You know, many people probably think of this area as being a small, rural area, but we actually draw a lot of students from a large surrounding area. We probably aren't the farthest away from school. I would be willing to guess that some families may be close to 20 to 23 miles away from the middle school.

Something else that people may not realize is that Owen Valley Middle School is one of the largest middle schools in the state. It has sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students. Casey [her daughter] was scared to death of everything when she came here. The school that she'd attended before [coming to OVMS] was around 194 students. There was only one class of 5th graders; she knew everybody in it! It was hard coming to this school with multiple classes of 6th graders, changing classes, new classes, and lockers to deal with! This change that Casey was going through [at the middle school] was one reason I got involved in the *Parents Sharing Books* program. I love to read, and she always has a book to read. I felt that since both of us continue to be readers that maybe this [PSB] was a way I could still keep in touch with her and what's going on here at school.

I thought that maybe it might make her journey [into middle school] a little easier on her. I think it has. I think it's made it easier, because she feels like Mom's not completely cut off from her world. I know it may sound strange, but the idea of being 15 or 16 miles from your children once they go off to school is a real different feeling that I've never had to deal with before this year. I think many parents feel the same way; when they [students] come here, we are afraid that all ties have been broken and Casey felt that way, too. So with me being involved with this [PSB], she felt like I wanted to stay in touch; we're still doing things together; she may feel like "I'm not all alone." I think it has helped Casey feel more comfortable in her middle school situation.

Mrs. Wilson: This has been a personal program; a program that encourages personal contact with the school. Mrs. Staley [OVMS's PSB leader] has kept in close contact with us; we have a lot of communication going on in our program. This has made us feel very welcome! PSB has helped to make me feel and be a part of the school. Our elementary was so small that all the teachers knew every child by name, and they knew what parent(s) belonged to what child. It's not this way at the middle school, but PSB was a way for me to feel like I belonged.

Mrs. Arney: Mrs. Staley's PSB program is the only thing I can think of that parents have been included in at this school. PSB is the only opportunity that has allowed parents to stay in contact

with the school. I've got to give her most of the credit for pushing so hard to let parents have this [PSB] experience.

Mrs. Staley always makes us feel so welcome; it's genuine, too! Neither one of our daughters has Mrs. Staley for a teacher, but they feel very comfortable around her. I think that's a good sign. You can usually expect kids to feel a little comfortable around teachers they know, but not always with those whom they aren't in class with. Kids who don't have her in class like her; I'm impressed by this.

I have a daughter who is in third grade and she's sort of backwards about meeting new people and being around people. She wanted to come to the meetings, so that's a strong sign that she must have felt welcome!

Mrs. Wilson: Mrs. Staley plans for parents and kids at these meetings. We discuss books together and then sometimes she has the kids go off together to do their own thing. I think this gives parents a chance to talk about things that they may be concerned about. Kids don't seem to be threatened about the separate groups; it's a time for them to talk about kid things and we can talk about parent things! I like including the kids; it's just more time we can spend with them. I don't think we'd have the commitment without them.

Mrs. Arney: I think including kids at our meetings helps the kids realize that reading is okay and here's a place to belong if you read or want to be a better reader. We have a mixture of kids—readers, athletic kids, kids who don't really like to read—that want to come to PSB for a variety of reasons. PSB is sending a message to these kids and kids who don't belong to PSB that reading is for everybody.

Mrs. Wilson: There is a wide range of people in our group, and there is also a wide range of reading interests. It's been fun to listen to others talk about what they like to read.

We share a lot in this [PSB] group. We have working mothers and mothers who are on different shifts, and it's been helpful to hear other parents talk about when they are able to read and share with their kids. One mother said that she and her children read every morning at the breakfast table. I find this phenomenal; I would never have time to read in the morning, but we are able to do it at night.

Mrs. Arney: Even though Casey and I love to read, it's still sometimes hard to find time. Some of the PSB parents in our group are on the go just like we are and they shared that they read in the car. Now we could share our book (talk about it), but reading-wise—no way! With three kids in the car, it's almost impossible to be quiet to read! But I can still appreciate this type of suggestion, because you'll try different things that are working for other parents. Parents' ideas can make you think about how something different might work for you.

Mrs. Wilson: Originally, Jessica and I wanted to read together; just the two of us. We decided that Jessica would pick out a book that she wanted to read to me. Letting Jessica make the book choice got us off to a pretty good start, but we found that reading together didn't work for us. Jessica decided she would take the book to school and read it during spare time at school. This let Jessica set the pace. She would read to a certain point, and then she would leave the book with me so that I could read it at home. I would read what she had just finished. Since I was behind in

the reading [reading what Jessica had just finished] this didn't create any pressure for Jessica to keep up; I was the one who had to 'keep up' with Jessica! We didn't read at the same time, but we would read the same material and talk about it.

Mrs. Arney: That's basically how we started out, too. It seemed real natural to want to sit down and share these books with Casey. It wasn't hard to find the time to talk about the books we were reading, but it did take some shuffling to try to arrange time to read together. I'm going back to school myself, so I had to read Casey's books whenever I could catch a moment, and Casey wouldn't always be around to sit down with me and read. Casey would take the book to school and read it. I would usually read the book at night when everyone else had gone to bed! We got in the habit of discussing the book the next morning. We did a lot of sharing before Casey went off to school.

We've probably shared five or six books this year, but we've started to talk about other things we are reading. We have an Owen County newspaper, and many times I'll say to Casey, "Did you read this article in the newspaper?" Then she'd pick it up and read it. We are discussing things like this and it is amazing how these little articles can keep us in touch with each other.

Mrs. Wilson: I'm finding that this idea of 'sharing' what we read is carried over in other family things. I read to Jessica's brother William, and I noticed that she'll creep up on the bed and listen when I read to him. My husband Don will listen too if he's in the same room when we are reading. He'll sit down and listen, too. I think it's great to be able to enjoy books that we typically consider "children's" books!

Mrs. Arney: We got into the Laura Ingalls Wilder series that way. Every night at a certain time, we gathered in the family room. The kids would lie on the floor with their blankets and pillows, and I would read. Casey would read sometimes for a change; I enjoy listening to her read. My husband even joined us on several occasions! I think this gives kids a picture or sets an example for them to grow up with.

Mrs. Wilson: We're just as busy as everybody else, but I want my children to understand that I think their reading is important. We make reading fun at home, and something that we look forward to. This may sound strange, but one evening last week we got home late and William started playing Nintendo just before bedtime. He wanted to finish his game before he went to bed, and I told him that if he finished the game there wouldn't be time for reading. He turned it off and wanted to be read to! I think he enjoys the stories, but I also think he likes the time together.

Mrs. Arney: Reading with Casey has been an enriching experience. I felt that it put Casey and me on equal terms. When we go into bookstores now, we constantly interact while we are looking at books. She showed me the book *Arachnophobia* and she said, "I think this will be nice to read, but I want you to come and look to see if there is something else you like." Casey will pick up a book and ask me to read the back of it. And I'll do the same with her. I feel like we are both understanding each other's needs and responding to these needs by choosing books that we can share together. It's nice to have Casey interested in what I like to read, and listening to her be supportive of my interests.

We still have reading interests that the other person doesn't really enjoy. Casey loves horror stuff, and I can read just about anything except horror! We learned to compromise. One time we would read something like *Arachnophobia*, and then we read something that I liked. I picked *The Haunting of Frances Rain*.

Mrs. Wilson: Reading with Jessica has placed us in roles that we have never experienced before. Jessica is picking up books and more or less telling me what to do! I wasn't telling her what we were going to read; she was making choices about which books we were going to read. She says to me, "Oh Mom, I think you'll like this one."

Jessica thinks it's funny that I'm willing to read certain authors that she enjoys but whom I don't particularly like. But Jessica has also surprised me when she picks a book to read that reflects my reading interest more than hers.

Mrs. Arney: I can go to the library now and pick out books for Casey. I know her reading interests better because we are doing PSB. I picked out four books, and she has read three of them so far. Casey told me, "Mom, they're all great!" This probably wouldn't have happened without PSB. Before PSB, I would have gone through and picked out books that I thought she **should** read.

Mrs. Wilson: That's what I found myself doing before PSB; picking books that I read when I was Jessica's age. I loved the book so I expected Jessica to like it, too. We're different and our reading interests are different.

Mrs. Arney: Casey is reading books now that I read when I was in high school. And some of the things she is reading are rather shocking! I was surprised at the language in some of these books, but I know that Casey hears this same language at school.

We talked about this kind of language. It was a great opportunity to talk about abusive language, morals, and expectations. It opened my eyes as a parent. I know Casey is around this type of language and behavior that is unacceptable in our family, and I respect her for having the willpower to not conform to this.

We read a book, *The Pig Man* I think, about an alcoholic kid who was trying to hide it from his parents. We talked a great deal in depth about this because I was bothered by it. We actually talked about how we would work through this if we knew somebody who had this problem. It was so good to listen to Casey, an eleven-year old, talk about what she would do to help. We worked through it together, and I came away knowing where my child was coming from.

Mrs. Wilson: Some of the topics are a little uncomfortable, but at least we're keeping current. We know what they're hearing at school, and we know what's on their mind. They are reading about characters that are 15 and 16 years old. They are reading about things that are very interesting to them at this age, but they are also reading about life.

PSB has been such a positive influence in our relationship. I think it has given us a common denominator; we both like to read and we both respect the other one's love for reading, but we had never shared it. PSB gives us a chance to talk. Jessica doesn't tell me what's going on at

school; she doesn't gossip; and she doesn't keep me current on what's happening in our lives in relation to her. With the books, that's one avenue that we are communicating on.

Mrs. Arney: Casey will tell me things now that are going on at school. When she started middle school, it wasn't like this; at first, she didn't tell me anything! When I showed an interest in PSB and wanted to do it with her, things changed. Casey comes home now and asks me "What's going on?" I think it's because I've shown an interest in her by taking the time for PSB and showing her that it's okay to do things with your parents even when you get older! Now think about who's the adult here! I think if more people would get involved with this PSB program, they would see some big changes in their children and how they act toward them. We can't expect our children to show an interest in us if we aren't setting the example. I'm the parent, and I have to take the initiative!

Mrs. Wilson: Mrs. Staley has gone out of her way to make us feel that the program is important and that what we are doing is important. The materials, discussions, and suggestions for books have been so helpful. There have always been a variety of books to choose from.

Mrs. Arney: Mrs. Staley recognized PSB participants at the school's spring awards night. That's another thing that she has done that was way beyond her responsibilities as a PSB leader. Not only did she give awards to our children, but she had awards for the parents and asked us to get up on the stage to be recognized.

Mrs. Wilson: There are children who are athletically gifted and they should be recognized, but it was so nice to be recognized for something that we value and work hard to support at home. We drive one hour to participate in PSB because we think it is important enough for our children.

Mrs. Arney: The first thing I tell parents who will be sending children to the middle school next year is "Sign up for the *Parents Sharing Books* program! It's worth the time!" After that awards night, I hope people think of me as a parent who is interested enough in my children and their well-being to take time from our busy life to pursue something as worthwhile as PSB. It's reading with your children, but it's also keeping in touch with your children in today's society.

APPENDIX O:
PSB Enhanced Parent/Child Relationships and Family Communication

Perhaps the most significant contribution the *Parents Sharing Books* program made was providing parents and children the opportunity to spend quality time with each other, and enhancing their relationship while they were sharing books. Some parents said that the PSB program provided information that helped them improve their children's reading ability, but many of these parents revealed that PSB enhanced the communication between them and their children. It is the richness of their conversations during these interviews that revealed the quality of their experiences with PSB.

Parents Sharing Books answered other important needs for these children and their parents. These parents' stories revealed that sharing books with their children gave them the opportunity to see their children grow and notice how their thinking was becoming more mature. Parents talked about how books gave them the courage to discuss difficult subjects with their children. These positive, and sometimes intimate, book-sharing opportunities reassured children that they could come to their parents with problems and questions. Children shared that they liked how their parents took time to listen to them and were interested in their ideas and thoughts. Moreover, these book-sharing times helped both parents and children understand each other's point of view.

The Bradfords' Story

Overview: Leslie and her mother agree to met with me when most families are thinking about sitting down to dinner. Mrs. Bradford has just come from her job as a computer customer-service representative. Mrs. Bradford had been working part-time outside the home, but has started working full-time just prior to the time of our interview. Her job requires long hours and occasional trips away from home.

Her daughter, Leslie, is a fifth grade student at McCullough Middle School in Marion, Indiana. Leslie is a confident, articulate, and witty young lady who does not find it difficult to express what is on her mind, even when she is surrounded by adults! Leslie laughs when her mother describes her as "anything but shy." Laughter comes just as easily from Mrs. Bradford when Leslie tells us that they are "a very busy family." Leslie goes on to say, "in fact, it can get pretty hectic around our house! My mom may be working late, and she calls to tell us to start dinner. My sister and I get the popcorn popper out and fix dinner for all of us!"

It is obvious that Mr. and Mrs. Bradford provide strong models for motivating Leslie to become a good reader. They surround her with reading materials, nurture her interests, and seek out books to support them. The Bradfords clearly value reading in their home. Leslie, an excellent student, is also an avid reader, who knows how to choose books which fit her own interests, and feels comfortable rejecting those which do not. One would be inclined to ask why, then, do a parent and child who have established strong habits of reading for pleasure at home participate in *Parents Sharing Books*.

Leslie implies that their involvement in the *Parents Sharing Books* program at her school developed because both she and her mother felt a need to communicate better with each other and a desire to spend time together. In Leslie's view, their family life is busy and she wants to spend quality time with her mother. Leslie's first-hand knowledge suggests that she is entering a difficult period in her life, and that she is approaching this developmental stage just when everyone in the family is adjusting to her mother's career changes. This sometimes makes it difficult for Leslie and her mother to spend time together, and they are both concerned about maintaining the positive mother and daughter relationship they have experienced in earlier times.

Leslie's awareness of her own needs and the desire to establish a positive relationship with her mother helps her make the decision to become involved in the *Parents Sharing Books* program in her school. At a time when we believe peer pressure is greater than family influences, Leslie chooses to participate in something that she feels can enhance the relationship with her mother.

Mrs. Bradford implies that the program helps her realize that children need parents' support even when they are model students. Parents must not overlook the varied benefits of the *Parents Sharing Books* program. For some, it may provide help in assisting children in their reading ability, but for the Bradfords it enhances the communication between Leslie and her mother.

In addition, Mrs. Bradford feels strongly that parents must be involved with their children at all grade levels. For many parents, sharing books with their children is an ongoing activity in the family. But for parents who think that book sharing stops once their children can read

independently, participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* program is an opportunity to re-establish the habit of reading with their children at home.

Perhaps the most important parental contribution the Bradfords are making after setting the stage for reading and other intellectual activity is to make available books and other reading materials in their home for their children. This does not necessarily mean buying books or journals, but it involves going to the library, borrowing books from friends and neighbors, and making available other sources of books. We believe that parents should make getting books to their children a high priority. It is quite literally providing information and education, not just providing paper with printing on it.

Mrs. Bradford thinks that sharing books with her daughter gives her the opportunity to see her child grow and notice how Leslie's thinking is becoming more mature. Moreover, their book-sharing times help both Leslie and her mother understand each other's point of view. In Mrs. Bradford's words, "we came to know each other better, and I understand myself a little better."

Mrs. Bradford indicates that books give her the courage to discuss difficult subjects with Leslie. When they share books about problems adolescents commonly experience, Mrs. Bradford says she finds it easier to talk to Leslie about these issues and concerns than she normally would. This positive, and sometimes intimate, book sharing reassures Leslie that she can come to her mother with her problems and questions, and her mother will listen.

Because of Mrs. Bradford's suggestions about sharing books with her adolescent daughter and those from other parents, we believe that fiction that deals frankly with the problems youngsters experience during puberty can provide support to parents in discussing these matters with their children. Mrs. Bradford indicates that books can help parents who fear that they cannot talk with their kids about sensitive or personal subjects.

The Bradfords' motive for participating in the Parents Sharing Books program is personal rather than academic. Leslie wants a good relationship with her mother, and both she and her mother are willing to devote the time to each other that is necessary to make it work. The fact that Leslie wants to continue to set aside time to read and share with her mother, even when they are apart, indicates that something special is occurring between them through the process of sharing books. The relationship that Leslie and her mother share today as a result of participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* program will continue to have a positive influence on Leslie's personal and intellectual growth in the years to come. This is Leslie's and Mrs. Bradford's story about how the *Parents Sharing Books* program at McCullough Middle School came to play an important role in enhancing their mother and daughter relationship.

Leslie: Mrs. Hoffman came to our class to explain the program. She said that she wanted students to come to the meetings who would be dedicated. Mrs. Hoffman told us about the special books that just the people who joined *Parents Sharing Books* could use. She talked about sharing these books with your parents and how sometimes books can help us talk about our problems or worries. Characters in books might be going through what we are going through in our life. Mrs. Hoffman explained that reading together can just be a way to spend quality time with your parents.

I decided to try it, because I never read with my mom any more. She is busy, and we never spend time together. She gets home, we eat, go to bed, and don't see each other until the next morning. We didn't spend much quality time together. I also knew this other person in my class who was in *Parents Sharing Books*. She and her mom have a pretty good relationship. My mom is busy and she didn't spend much time with me or my sister, so I thought this might be good for us.

I really wanted to do this program, and when I came home to tell my mom about it, she said somebody had talked to her about it, too. Mom said that if I would like to be in it, then we would be in it and really work at doing it. We both wanted to do it.

Mrs. Bradford: Leslie has initiated this whole thing. She was real adamant that we do this. She came home with the announcement and made sure that I knew about it and when the first meeting would be held. She said, "This is what I've been talking about. Here's when they are going to meet. Now we're going to be there, right?" Leslie was very persistent!

Right now, I am at two schools with the grade levels the girls are in. When teacher and parent groups approach me about being on councils, committees, or helping with activities at school, I try to contribute. I have not really gotten involved in the Parents' Advisory Council here [McCullough Middle School] as I did in the elementary school, but it's not because someone has not approached me. I don't know that I would have the commitment for the program [PSB] if a teacher had contacted me, rather than my daughter. I probably would have come to a meeting, but may not have stuck with it like Leslie and I have with the *Parents Sharing Books* program.

We are busy and it's hard to be a good participant when you are involved in everything. I try to tell the girls that we can pick and choose the activities that we really want. This *Parents Sharing Books* program was one thing that I felt Leslie thought was very important for us to do.

It has given me an opportunity to get involved with Leslie in a very positive way. Our efforts in doing *Parents Sharing Books* affect us directly. Leslie and I benefit from it—it's just for **us**. It contributes to our relationship, which is different than most parent councils, school meetings, or advisory committees.

My commitment stems from the fact that this was something that was important to Leslie. It was the kind of thing that we both wanted to do, and we both wanted to commit to it. That kind of encouragement helped me to make the effort to get here [to the meetings] and to share books with Leslie. Had Leslie not been so insistent that we do this, I'm not sure I would have been so committed to making it work.

I have always been involved in, or been a part of, my children's development and education. I enjoyed reading to them when they were young, and [I feel] it's up to the parent to continue that practice. I have always read, always loved to read, always had books in the home, and the children have always had a book in their hands. The girls see my husband and me read at home.

We use the library constantly. Leslie used to laugh at me [because] when she would have friends over, we would go to the library. She said I would say to her friends, "And you don't have a library card. Well, we'll stop by and get you a card. All you do is have your mom sign

it!" She kept saying, "Are you trying to make sure everybody in my class has a library card?" Well, yes, I guess I did! I think this is important!

Leslie: My mom has to coax my sister to read, but sometimes I can't put a book down that I am reading when it's time to go to bed. I can't remember the title of the book I was reading, but I had read so far into the book that I just had to finish it. I read it in one night. I stayed up real late to finish it. My mom and dad both came in and told me to go to bed. Mom came in for the third time to turn my light off, so I shoved my blanket under the door so they couldn't see the light. I got my little flashlight out and read the rest of the book! I finished that book!

We have a lot of books at home—too many to count! We have a bookshelf downstairs and we have a big bookcase that my dad made for all of our books. I have one in my room, too.

We go to the library all the time. If I ask my mom a question that she doesn't know much about, she always says, "Well, there are probably books at the library that can help us!" When I started showing signs of adolescence, my mom immediately went to the library and got a couple of books. I asked her a lot of questions. A couple of people in my class say their parents don't answer their questions. But my mom is not like that. She helps me a lot. She will go to the library and she will check books out.

My language arts teacher is really into reading, too. She has posters that are about reading all over the walls. At one point, she had posters all over the wall and you could hardly see the wall. She has lots of bookshelves in her room and all of them are filled with books. She encourages us to read by having required reading and we get points, and then get prizes if we get so many points. We talk with others in the class about the books we are reading, and that's fun.

The reading teacher said that if you read fifty pages in a book and still do not enjoy the book, then that is not the right book for you. It may be the right book for somebody else, but maybe it's not for you. We have read *Anne of Green Gables; Anne of Avonlea; Welcome Home, Jellybean*; and *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*. I brought home *Little Women*, but I quit that one!

I enjoy reading aloud with my mom now. When I don't understand parts in the book, she is right there to help me understand it better. She gives me a lot of answers, she listens to my opinion, and I listen to her opinion. Sometimes we don't agree, but at least we hear both sides now.

Mrs. Bradford: I think this [PSB] is a very positive way of continuing to share books with your children as they grow older. Now, had Leslie come home and wanted to do a program called "parents sharing physics" or something like that, I don't think I would have responded quite so positively! It was very easy to respond to Leslie's request, because she was so enthusiastic; she loves to read, and so do I.

Her sister will come to the middle school next year, and I think about how she would have reacted to this invitation to participate in *Parents Sharing Books*. She doesn't enjoy reading like Leslie, and we actually have to work at getting her to read. Leslie's sister probably would not have come home and told me about this program. I will have to be the one to initiate it next year for her, but at least I know the program is here for us.

To make it work, you have to say, "Okay, this is when we are going to do this." Otherwise, it will never happen. Obviously, there are things that come up, and we may not have time every evening to read together. Setting a definite time aside to read together is the best way. We come together in the evening with the two girls. I try to spend separate time with each of them. It is a nice way to wind up the day, and I think it is a good time for Leslie and me to spend time together—just the two of us to talk about things that are going on with us.

Leslie: Before we started this, my mom and I kept away from each other a lot. If I had questions about something, I might ask my mom, but I would ask my friends, too. They would say something entirely different from what my mom said. This sometimes caused trouble for my mom and me. I feel more comfortable coming to my mom now [after being in PSB]. I might ask my friends about things, but my mom's opinion is important now.

Mrs. Bradford: Because of Leslie's younger sister's needing more time, I spent less time reading with Leslie and probably less time with Leslie in general. Her sister's needs demanded more of my attention, and I tended to give her more of my time out of necessity. We think that they [Leslie and children like her] do not need that kind of support, because they are good readers, enjoy reading, and do okay in school. Now I realize that Leslie needs my attention just as much as her sister, only in a different way. *Parents Sharing Books* has helped us to make time just for the two of us. This [PSB] is just something for **us**.

We have used this time to talk about things. There may be situations in the book that we are not experiencing, but we still talk about them. I share my beliefs, and Leslie knows where I stand on these issues. We can talk about these things in a calm manner, and I can listen to her talk without the anger or fighting. We are involved in what we are talking about, but it's not an emotional discussion.

Sharing books together made me realize she [Leslie] is growing up! *Parents Sharing Books* has given me an opportunity to see her growing. I see her thinking for herself. I see her growing into this independent young lady. And, you know, it's exciting!

Leslie: Some of the books we read together help us talk about things that I am going through, but also help us talk about things that normally we would disagree on or argue about. There was this one book, and the girl in it had a real attitude problem, and she was constantly fighting with her mother. She needed "an adjustment," as we would say in our house. I asked my mom why she would act that way. Mom didn't know why, and the conversation led to me asking Mom if I am like that girl in the book. And my mom said, "Well, yes, a little. And I said, "Well, I don't agree with you." This got us to talking about why each of us felt the way we did. It helped to understand why my mom thinks the way she does, and I think she understands a little better why I sometimes act and do the things I do.

Before we did *Parents Sharing Books*, we probably would have disagreed and that would have been the end of it. She would have said, "It's like this and if you don't agree with me that's tough." I felt like it was always her terms. We still disagree, but now we share our opinions and try to understand how the other person feels.

Mrs. Bradford: We have used events in the books we read together to talk about personal situations. Not only has it helped me to understand Leslie's feelings and attitudes, but it has

helped me to see myself through other characters in the book. I am asking myself, "Do I do things or say things that make you feel like I'm this green monster over here trying to control your life?"

Through our sharing, I have tried to help Leslie see the "flip-side." Sometimes mothers and fathers have to take a position on something that is sometimes unpleasant—sometimes a parent's role is taking responsibility and making some decisions for their children, and yet it may be a position or decision that seems mean in the eyes of your children. During our conversations, I have tried to explain that some of our decisions may make her [Leslie] unhappy, but the choices we have made are because we have her best interest at heart and we love her.

Sharing books has helped me to see both sides and have an opportunity to talk about why we do the things we do. It's different now. We are talking about these same concerns and problems that are in a book, rather than actually having the real disagreement in our own relationship.

There have been times when just having the book and reading what is going on in the book has made me more courageous in bringing up subjects. Something that would sound so awkward to just confront Leslie about, is so easy to do when we run across a delicate subject in a book. Now I feel comfortable stopping while [we're] reading a book together and saying, "Do you think we could talk about this?", or "Do you really know what that means?"

I think part of it goes back to having the structured time of reading and talking within boundaries, and yet free to say, "Well, this is how I feel" or "This is what I would do." Hopefully, because we have taken the time now within the boundaries we set aside for reading, we can find it easier to come to one another during other times. It has opened a door that no parent wants to close.

Leslie: We are going to keep doing this. I plan to do it next year, too. I am going to France this summer, and I told Mom that I want to buy two copies of the books I am going to take with me. She can keep copies for her, and I will take the other copies with me. At the same time every night, we will read and that way we will both know that we are still sharing even when I am away.

The Bucks' Story

Overview: This story is about Cathy Buck and her daughter, Julie. Mrs. Buck is a parent leader for the Jones Middle School *Parents Sharing Books* program. Mrs. Buck is also a teacher assistant at the middle school. Julie is a sixth grader at Jones Middle School.

Both Julie and her mother are rather soft spoken, but it's clear from listening to them that they share a close mother and daughter relationship. Julie describes their relationship as "pretty good." Mrs. Buck agrees and adds, "I think Julie is able to come to me with a lot of her feelings. I also know that Julie thinks through a lot of things on her own. But if it's a pretty big issue or something that's really bothering her, I think she would feel free to come to me and talk about it."

Julie and her mom like to shop, and Julie thinks that "sitting at home and making a microwave dinner and watching Jeopardy every night with her mom" are great! Julie and her mother exchange smiles when Mrs. Buck begins to talk in a humorous tone about baking cookies together: "Whenever we start baking fun things, like chocolate chip cookies, Julie likes the measuring and the mixing and the baking part, but she isn't very good on the cleanup. She's just not into cleaning! She [Julie] likes to see if she can dodge those types of jobs, and she does real well! We have a good time together!"

Mrs. Buck spends a lot of time with her daughter. Her husband works a lot. Mr. Buck moonlights many evenings to help pay for Jason's college. Mrs. Buck feels that she can do her part by making sure Julie is given quality time. Cathy Buck feels that *Parents Sharing Books* provides many opportunities for her and Julie to become even closer. "Many evenings it is just the two of us, and we have come to cherish this time that we make for each other."

Even though Julie and her mother share a close relationship, reading together for enjoyment was not something they did before participating in the *Parents Sharing Books* program. Mrs. Buck implies that she was aware of Julie's lack of interest in reading prior to PSB, but it was difficult for her to understand Julie's feelings. Mrs. Buck loves to read..."it's an escape for me and I find it relaxing. I find it almost strange that someone doesn't like to read for pleasure."

Julie likes math but not reading, and timidly admits that she "wasn't very happy about doing PSB with her mother." It is Mrs. Buck's son, Jason, who encourages her to help Julie develop an interest in reading. At the time of this interview Jason is a freshman at a state university and shared with his mother his current feelings about reading: "I've looked at the kids around me at college. The ones that do well are the ones that read. I regret that I didn't read more growing up. I'm going to make a point this summer to read just for pleasure to build up my reading ability." Jason's observation provides incentive for Mrs. Buck to improve Julie's reading attitudes and assist other parents in the community by motivating them to share books with their children.

There is evidence in their conversation that Julie still needs her mother's support and guidance in setting aside time to read for pleasure. Julie's reading attitudes are changing and she is becoming more aware of her own reading interests, but the characteristic theme in Mrs. Buck's and Julie's PSB story is the quality time they spend with each other sharing and talking.

Mrs. Buck: I love to read. I love sitting down with a new book and reading until I finish it. That kind of reading is an escape for me and I find reading very relaxing. Our son Jason will be finishing his freshman year at Indiana University, and he made an interesting comment. I had picked up a new book to read and when we got home from running errands, he pulled the book out of the sack. He remarked that he has been noticing kids in his college classes, and Jason feels that the ones that do well are the ones that read a lot before entering college. He thinks they have developed the ability to sit down and read the quantity of reading material that college-level classes require of students. Jason told me that he regrets that he didn't read more growing up. I wonder if I could have been more of an influence on Jason. I read to both our children when they were young, but like most parents, we didn't continue to read as much with our children as they got older and were able to read on their own.

I told Jason about the *Parents Sharing Books* program at Jones, and how I hope I can help Julie grow to be an avid reader. I realize now that even though I like to read and she sees me read, we need something more. Jason's comments have helped me realize a need to continue reading with children regardless of their ages so that reading skills are developed that advance them to another reading stage. We need to devote time to helping our children develop these skills so they are prepared when they go away to college or any other line of higher education. It's like I need to "condition" Julie so that she can progress to another level. Julie needs to see the pleasure reading can offer her. Right now at her age, reading centers around homework and school work. I realize that it's difficult to think about reading when that's what you have done all day at school, but I think if I can get Julie to enjoy reading and see reading in a different light then she will get interested in reading.

This program [PSB] has helped Julie to see this. We have read several books together. By reading these books together, we have gotten to the good parts, and those interesting parts help us to continue to read further and see what happens. Julie is seeing that these books can be interesting and that they tell a story that she can enjoy. You don't get this kind of excitement in a textbook, and kids need this nudge or opportunity to understand there are different kinds of reading. I didn't expect miracles to happen by doing this program, but I think that it has opened a door to reading that was previously closed for Julie.

Julie: I wasn't very excited about doing PSB. I didn't mind sharing books with my mom, but it was just that it was reading. I thought it would be just like doing school work. But then after we started reading the books, I enjoyed it. I think being together with my mom has a lot to do with it. We read *Cracker Jackson* together. We picked it out to read first. We looked through the PSB books, and it looked good. It was also on my reading list. I had to do a book report on one of the books on this list so I thought reading this book would be a good idea.

I think I enjoyed *Cracker Jackson* because it was so up-to-date. Before I was in *Parents Sharing Books*, I mostly read books about movies that were out or books about TV programs. I still like reading books about animals, and I also like the *Baby-sitter Club* books, but I'm more willing to read other types of books now. Listening to the other kids talk about the books they were reading was helpful. Their opinions about books helped me decide what I wanted to read next.

I think another thing that made this fun was that I knew I didn't have to read all of the books by myself. My mom and I would take turns reading. Mom mostly read at the beginning of the

books, but when they got interesting it was easy for me to do some of the reading. Mom read until she got tired, and then I would take over. We just shared chapters and didn't worry about who was reading more. This made it fun. *Sarah Bishop* was hard for us to get into, but reading it together helped me get to the good part.

Mrs. Buck: I told Julie that I was surprised about the books that were available to her. I didn't realize books for this age were so up-to-date and current. It gave us an opportunity to talk about things that go on today. One of the books we read *[Cracker Jackson]* was about a little boy whose baby-sitter was being abused by the husband. It was very graphic. It described what the husband did to her, and how she ended up in the hospital. Even the soap operas she watched in the book were the same ones that are on TV now. Little things like this help you identify with the story, and these events pull you into the story. When events and situations in books are so real, it's easy to talk about things like this with your child.

I enjoyed just hearing Julie's input on how she felt about the things that were going on in the story. I'm very thankful for this opportunity to share with Julie. PSB allowed me to laugh and cry with Julie over things in the stories that touched us in special ways.

I think both of us felt some pressure at the beginning. I'm the parent leader for our PSB program at Jones, and Julie was the only sixth grader in the program at the time. I'm sure I put some pressure on myself and Julie to do this program. But the fact that we were forced to set time aside to read together turned out to be a valuable experience.

We get in the rut of being so busy that we really do forget what is important. Our routine didn't allow much time for just Julie and me. I decided if this was going to work we'd have to schedule in this reading time just like we do all of our other activities.

We set aside this half-an-hour to an hour every night to read and I enjoyed just being close enough to touch Julie, reading the same thing, and talking. That sounds so simple, but how many of us really talk to members in our own immediate families? We don't think anything of talking to our friends or giving our neighbors some time, but we don't give the important ones in our family enough of that one-on-one time.

I think that we overlook how much pleasure the simple things in life can give us. It's hard for me to express the feelings I have about having this opportunity to share with Julie. I'm very thankful for this program, and I am very motivated to share this positive experience with other parents in our school.

Julie: I like the time that my mom and I sit down together. I just know that from six o'clock to maybe seven o'clock Mom and I sit down and read together. I haven't had to give up anything. We just set that time to be together. I can still come home from school and play outside or do homework. We still watch Jeopardy, too! We can probably do this during the summer, too. Maybe when we go to the pool and they have swimming breaks, my mom and I can read during that time.

We shared the books by just talking. I like to write my own stories at school in English class, but I didn't want to use the PSB journals. It seemed too much like school. In my English

class we sometimes write in our journals about the stories we are reading so I didn't feel like doing that at home.

I think I'm getting to be a better reader. By listening to my mom read, I learn how to pronounce words better and I learn new vocabulary words. While we're reading together, I just ask what a word means. If I'm reading by myself, I may just skip over those words. And it's been easier getting into a book with my mom helping with the reading. Before we started sharing books, I would just quit a book sometimes before I ever got to the good part. Now my mom can help me get to the good part and finish a book.

I've told my friend about the good books we have read. She has read all the books that my mom and I have shared together. I think PSB would be more fun if you got your friends involved in it. You could share with your parents and then share with your friends what all of you think about a book.

If my mom wants to do PSB next year, I'll probably do it with her. It was fun...just the two of us.

Mrs. Buck: We'll continue. I've appreciated this time together with Julie too much not to consider doing it again. I've really appreciated the *Parents Sharing Books* program because I wouldn't have taken the time to read with Julie without this program.

The Putrichs' Story

Overview: Gayle is a young lady who has no trouble reading or being motivated to read, but PSB answers other important needs for Gayle and her mother Barbara. Aside from the quick-witted bantering, laughter, and gesturing that goes on between Gayle and Barbara during our interview, there is a sense of affection and mutual respect that embellishes their conversation. "Respect" is a big theme that surfaces in their story. Barbara talks about how their relationship has changed since they have been sharing books. She says this has provided an "area of equality" for her and Gayle, and it has allowed her to get in touch with and appreciate her daughter's emerging maturity.

When I asked if they have a good relationship, Gayle slides her arm around her mother's shoulder, gives her a quick hug, and responds, "Yes, but she yells too much. Jesus' mother is probably the only mother who never yelled. I'll bet his mother didn't yell at him for a sloppy room!" Barbara fires back with more humor, "Now Gayle, you don't know that. If he was truly a human being, then he might have had a sloppy room, too. I'm sure there were times when his mother yelled at him to pick up his room! Maybe he even smarted back to her when she asked him where he had been when he was in the temple. She probably had to yell at him then. The Bible doesn't say, but maybe she even smacked him one; you never know. **But** I'm sure he obeyed her and was thankful that his mother cared enough to yell at him! Same thing; just a different time!"

The type of relationship that Gayle and her mother have is not much different from other relationships that parents and adolescents experience at this stage. They humorously talk about how they disagree and argue! Barbara laughs when she says, "Gayle doesn't want to be like me!" Gayle rolls her eyes and comments, "Oh, yeah. That's because you're my mother!"

Even though Gayle sees herself as different from her mother, their personalities exhibit similarities. They both are strong characters who display an air of independence and confidence in who they are. They have their own particular reading interests, and their discussions about these reading interests speak to us about being true to our own tastes and interests. Barbara reveals that she can't share Gayle's interest in Stephen King novels, but they do find other books to share. Gayle projects her sense of humor when she describes the distaste she has for the book *The Pigman*; "It took them three pages to describe a coffee mug! Too much boring detail!"

Barbara and Gayle both love to read, and it is this passion for reading that draws the two together. They use books to talk about situations that confront parents and children during this adolescent stage—from boy-girl relationships to obeying parents to cleaning up rooms! Barbara and Gayle must make an effort to find the time to do PSB. Barbara laughs, "It's [PSB] like dieting. When you get off the diet, you can't beat yourself up. You just decide you'll try again tomorrow!" They approach their book-sharing realistically, and with a sense of humor that jumps out at us when we listen to their story.

Mrs. Putrich: Books have always been important to me. We always had books at home when I was a child. My mother is an avid reader. My father, who went to school only through the ninth grade, always had a book in his hands. I've just grown up with books around me—there were always books, magazines, newspapers, and all sorts of reading things in our house.

Gayle: I remember my mom reading to me a lot when I was little. I learned to read when I was very young. I remember reading *Danny the Dinosaur* to my mom, and she thought I had memorized it from the TV. I had to read it from the book—with the TV off—before she would believe I could read it!

Mrs. Putrich: My husband grew up in a different sort of family. They didn't belong to any of the book clubs like my family did, and they didn't even subscribe to the newspaper. But I think the interest to read has always been there for my husband. He has an industrial arts major with a library science minor. When he took children's literature in college, he wrote a children's book. He has had offers to publish it. So the interest is there, and I think my love for reading has probably made a difference.

We're lucky in that both our children love to read. I have to go up and yell at Gayle, "Turn off the lights, it's time for bed!" She always says, "Oh, just let me finish this chapter."

Gayle: I will turn the light out when she yells, but then I keep a flashlight handy!

Mrs. Putrich: I've found flashlights and these new book lights that you can clip on the bed, under her bed. I know she reads under the covers with those things! I keep telling her I'm going to confiscate them one of these days!

Gayle: I just find it hard to quit reading in the middle of something exciting. I like to have several books going at one time. Sometimes I have started a book and just put it on my bookshelf and have forgotten about it. I might run across it again and finish it then. I like to have a couple of books going at once.

Here's how it works for me. By having several books going at once, you are always into one book, finishing one, and just starting one. This keeps me going. If one book is slow in the beginning, I know that my other book is at an interesting part. When I finish a book, I always have another book going. I never really feel like—"Oh, I'm finished!"

Mrs. Putrich: One would think that she might not enjoy PSB because she was already such an avid reader. She really did enjoy doing PSB because we haven't read many of the same books. Although our age difference has separated us in reading interests, we have talked about some of the books I read when I was her age. We have talked about *Anne of Green Gables*, but we haven't read it together.

Gayle: There are some books that I like to read that my mom will probably never read with me!

Mrs. Putrich: Gayle is into Stephen King, which I absolutely refuse to read! I did read his short stories, and Gayle and I talked about them. I think Gayle has gotten a kick out of the idea that she and I can read a book together that we both can enjoy.

Surprisingly enough, Gayle still enjoys being read to at her age. We'd be sitting at the kitchen table having our bedtime snack and I would read to her. She said, "Oh, I forgot how much fun it is to have somebody read to you!" We both enjoyed that time together.

Gayle: There are some books I just wouldn't read with my parents. Like I would never read *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret*. This is a book that I would never read with you. It's a kid book just like parents have their books that they wouldn't share with their kids. There are books on your bookshelf at home that you wouldn't share with me—yet!

Mrs. Putrich: Gayle wants to be a writer, so when we read together it gave us an opportunity to talk about how the author built up the events, using words to describe things that actually helped you picture what was going on, and even things that we didn't like about the authors writing. We were able to reach another level of reading and had a lot of fun talking about these things in books that we read. Our conversations moved from talking about our own personal feelings and opinions to what we thought about the writing.

I noticed Gayle coming home after our PSB meetings and telling me about books that we just had to read! The kids that did come to our meetings would sit off in their group and talk about the books they were reading with their parents or on their own. Gayle would come home and say "so-and-so said we have to read this book. I'll check the rack and see if it's in so we can read it."

I think the interaction that these kids were having during PSB was great. It provided incentive to continue to read. It wasn't just parents saying, "Let's read this." Everybody was in the act—teacher, parents, and kids suggesting books to read.

Gayle: I would probably never go up and start talking to another kid about PSB and the books we are reading with parents. That wouldn't be cool. But if someone comes up to me at school and asks about PSB, I tell them about it. I'd tell them that I like it, but only if they asked me about it.

Mrs. Putrich: I just think the best part of PSB is that it gives parents and kids a basis for coming together. Between school and work and all the other activities families are involved in, you have to try very hard to come together at dinner! Dinner is a family discussion about what everybody else is doing. PSB gives you an opportunity for a one-on-one discussion or relationship with your child. I felt like it forced us out of our parent-child roles. It required me to accept this other person's opinion.

Parents Sharing Books puts you in touch with your child and I think Gayle understands me a little better. Gayle asks me now when we finish a book, "Well, did you like it?" I think both of us are a little surprised that we enjoy the same things. We both respect the fact that we still have reading interests that are different, too. But even those differences have provided a positive response.

One day Gayle brought home this book—I think it was called *The Reluctant God*—about Egyptian stuff because she knew that I would like it. We visited a museum some time later and started talking about this book when trying to identify things in the museum. It was this "carry-over" from a book that made the museum so enjoyable. It's things like this that happen when you least expect it that make you realize that what you are doing has some significance.

Another good book for us was *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Gayle had no idea how things were for African-Americans even thirty years ago. She can't believe that I remember when there were restrooms for Blacks and Whites. Some of these books have been very enlightening for Gayle, who has been brought up in White, middle class suburbs.

Gayle is very independent, and she continues to declare her independence at this age. She doesn't want to be like me! We have our own way of doing things. I was afraid this idea of reading together and reading the same book would turn her off. But it's been good for both of us. It allowed us to look at each other not as a child and a mother, but people who have opinions and values and expectations. I'm sure Gayle would tell you that I'm a parent, but sometimes I'm not a human being! She has a hard time believing I was twelve once and that I might be able to understand how she feels and thinks!

Gayle: I was very surprised that my mom would want to read books that I like to read. But I was even more surprised when she actually enjoyed them!

Mrs. Putrich: Some days Gayle is twelve going on forty, and other days she is twelve going on six! She's very much a teenager! Her reading interests run the whole spectrum from archaeology to Stephen King to other books that just let her "veg-out," like Barbara Cartland and other romance novels.

Gayle's sixth grade teacher encouraged me to let Gayle explore her own reading. Gayle is beginning to read adult books like Danielle Steele, Sidney Sheldon, and others—she is taking things off my bookshelf at home. There are some books we just couldn't let her read, but I think Gayle understands why that is.

One of the first books we read together was *The Haunting of Francis Rain*, and it was a fun book for us to share. Some of the discussions Gayle and I had about the books we read surprised me. I thought her opinions were much more adult than I had expected. We talked about the boy-girl relationships in the books, and I was surprised at the maturity level at which Gayle approached them. I think both of us learned something about each other that surprised us. Gayle probably expected me to stand up for the parents in these books and, frankly, I expected Gayle to stand up for the kid all the time. But it wasn't that way. Gayle would talk about the things that the child did wrong and why she thought it was wrong. You hope that you teach your child values, and right from wrong, but you're never sure if that's how things will turn out. What these types of conversations have done for me is reassure me that the things we have tried to teach Gayle are part of her, and she pulls from that background or upbringing when she talks about these situations in books.

This [PSB] has provided an area of equality for us—we can relate with each other on a little more equal basis. It hasn't been a mother-daughter situation where both of us are trying to win or be right.

Gayle has a very strong character, and our opinions would differ on some of the things we shared about books. We had talked about kids voicing their opinions in our PSB group. I want Gayle to voice her opinion, but I also have made her back up her opinions when we would share books. I didn't want her to take the opposite view just for the sake of being opposite of how I felt. I wanted her to feel she could disagree with me, but I wanted her to be able to explain and reason "why" she disagreed.

We talked about "having our own opinions" before we started PSB at home. We both talked about how we wanted this to work and how both of us were entitled to express our own opinions. We agreed that agreeing to disagree or even to agree was okay—I didn't want this sharing to turn

into something that would be negative. We talked about how having our own opinion doesn't mean one of us is right and the other one is wrong. It only means that we have an opinion, and neither one of us expects the other person to change that opinion. We enjoyed this sharing, but I think the big carry-over is the exposure to each other that we had. We both had this experience of accepting someone else's view—that someone being a person you care very deeply about.

Gayle and I could easily have been at each other's throats during this experience, but we weren't! I think both of us wanted this to work. We both wanted this time together. It has turned out to be very much *our* time.

Our son goes to bed about an hour before Gayle. It became a routine for us. Gayle would take her shower and come down to the kitchen afterwards. Gayle has some medical problems so she needs to eat something at night, and she must eat certain things every day. We would sit down in the kitchen and read and talk about the book while she had her snack and a big glass of water. We made sure we had at least 30-45 minutes to do this. It got to be something that we really looked forward to at the end of a long day—almost like taking a sigh at the end of the day.

The kitchen may not sound like a very comfortable environment to read in, but it worked for us. Gayle is very involved with organizations and activities. She has freedom to do all these things, but she also realizes that things must be organized in order to get things accomplished and she knows what "hectic" feels like.

After a hectic day, this was the last thing we did at the end of the day. It was a quiet time, and we even turned lights low in the kitchen to make it feel more relaxed. We were able to work around everyone's busy schedule, because it was fun for us. There have been many nights in the kitchen that we didn't want to quit. I can remember comments like, "Well, you can't stop here!" or "Just two more pages!" or "Read just to the end of this chapter!" Then we'd get to the end of the chapter and say, "We've got to start this next chapter!"

When I first heard about *Parents Sharing Books* I thought it was going to be more like book reports. I went to the first meeting and found out more about it. I thought it sounded like a good idea. In the past, I have paid attention to what Gayle reads, but as she got older I didn't continue to read with her. I had kind of lost touch with what was contemporary for her. This has been an eye-opener for me.

One thing I am pleased about is the quality of the books we have read during *Parents Sharing Books*. I feel like the books we have read are written on an adult level. The language and situations in these books don't talk down to this age group of kids. Many of the situations and events in the books have been very realistic, and they relate to what Gayle and her friends are experiencing. It's made me more aware of the quality of literature that is available for this age group. It is quality like this that gets kids reading and involved with the characters.

Gayle: It was my mom's idea to do this [PSB]. I told her "whatever you want to do." I already love to read, so doing this was not asking me to do something I don't like to do.

At first I thought PSB would be reading books about raising your kids. I knew my mom would never read those kinds of books with me! Those books about raising your eleven-, twelve-,

and thirteen-year old kids are a lot of baloney. I'm sorry, but that stuff doesn't work! But I did enjoy reading the books that we [mother and daughter] read.

Mrs. Putrich: We are lucky—we have the habit of reading at home already established. What PSB has done for me is it has made me look at the level of literature Gayle has available to her. What Gayle is reading today is so different from what I read when I was her age. I think Gayle has benefitted, because it has forced her to become aware of her own choices in reading and realize that adults can enjoy literature at this level. I think this kind of awareness gives children at this age a respect and esteem for what they are reading. Books that adults can enjoy help to remove that "kid stuff" image that books sometime have.

The first couple of books we picked to read were excellent—real page-turners. That kind of a start helped us to get PSB started at home. But then we picked the book *The Pigman*, and that one did nothing for us. Gayle, who loves to read, even commented, "Do we have to read this tonight!" I kept saying, "Oh, come on. Maybe we just need to read a couple more pages to get into it." Finally one night Gayle closed the book on me and she wouldn't read it any more! I even admitted that it was awful. I handed it to her to take back and pick something else.

Gayle: I hate to give up on a book, but I just couldn't get cranked up over this one—too much detail. It took them three pages to describe what a coffee mug looked like!

Mrs. Putrich: Gayle has picked other books that she needed help from me to her get through. She brought home Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. She got bogged down with the language in this book. There were some very hard words in this book. I kept telling her to just listen to the story as I read it, but she got hung up on the meaning of words that she didn't know. It just didn't work for us, so that was another one that wasn't a good choice for us. Picking the right book to share is very important. Reading shouldn't make you suffer—you have to quit if it isn't enjoyable.

It's helped to be able to relate to things through a book. It's easier to talk about something in a book and be thinking about how it's similar to a real situation in your life than to talk about the real thing. It's a nice way to air your feelings, but doing it through a book helps to de-personalize it. I think while we were sharing books, our relationship changed. There was less "telling" in our relationship—less "why didn't you do that" and less "do this!" There was less abruptness in our conversations and relationship. Taking the time for each other gave us time to relate to each other.

I noticed that when schedules changed at home this affected how we shared books. When we first started PSB, we had the time to sit down and read together. As Gayle got more involved in athletics, school plays, and more homework, we were only able to talk about the books we were reading. When things get hectic around home, we find ourselves moving back in this direction—not sharing books as much as we want to. We will get back to sharing more, because it has been something we both enjoyed. We talked about it the other day, and feel that summer is going to be good, because it will give us more time to read together.

Here's what participants in the *Parents Sharing Books* program are saying:

"I'm very thankful for this program, and I am very motivated to share this positive experience with other parents."

Cathy Buck, parent

"It allowed us to look at each other not as a child and a mother, but as people who have opinions and values and expectations. Our relationship changed."

Barbara Putrich, parent

"PSB helped my mom and me make time for one another. I was surprised that she enjoyed reading my books and would take the time to read with me. I think I understand my mom a little better."

Leslie Bradford, student

"I heartily recommend the Parents Sharing Books *program. It was an opportunity for leaders, parents, and students to come together for positive interaction."*

Gloria Strott, PSB leader

"Parents Sharing Books *has provided us with the materials and support for promoting positive parent involvement."*

Larry Cummins, principal

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